

VIDEO GAMES: 'Amid Evil' evokes classic FPS [Page 26](#)

MUSIC: McCreery wins by betting on himself [Page 36](#)

TV: Big Boi expands reach with more acting work [Page 39](#)

EUROPE
& PACIFIC
WEEKEND
EDITION

NCAA TOURNAMENT
Nearing the end of bumpy 4 years, Allen has become Duke's elder statesman [Back page](#)



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URGENT CARE

US military doctors busy treating Iraqi forces training local staff as ISIS continues fight

[Page 7](#)



Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Soldiers from the 47th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad check a patient for wounds Nov. 24. They include, from left, Pfc. Michael Torres, Capt. Daniel Braun, Sgt. Jennifer Abbey, Dr. (Capt.) Cecily Vanderspurt and Spc. Brianna Camarena. Islamic State lost the territory it controlled in Iraq but still is wounding and killing security forces and civilians.

US military plans evacuation drill at same time as war games with S. Korea

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — Next month the military plans to practice one of its worst nightmare scenarios in South Korea — a mass evacuation — this time adding plans to fly some volunteers to the U.S.

The semiannual rehearsal, known as Focused Passage, is scheduled for April 16-

20. That will make April a busy month on the divided peninsula since the noncombatant evacuation operation, or NEO, exercise will occur at the same time as joint war games with the South.

The military holds evacuation exercises every spring and fall, involving mostly family members and civilian contractors. The plan to fly some participants to the U.S. is believed to be a first for the drills.

This spring's NEO will take place at a sensitive time. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is expected to hold historic summits with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in late April and with President Donald Trump in May.

Heightened tensions over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program have served as a wake-up call for NEO organizers as the possibility of conflict rose last year with

several missile tests by the North and threats of military action by both sides.

The situation has calmed after North Korea's participation in last month's Winter Olympics led to a series of diplomatic breakthroughs. But U.S. officials and experts said there's a new awareness about the need to be ready for the worst-case scenario.

SEE DRILL ON PAGE 3

MILITARY

Navy offers new bonuses to keep its pilots

By TYLER HLAIVAC
Stars and Stripes

The Navy is offering aviators as much as \$175,000 to stay in uniform as it struggles with a pilot shortage.

Pilots selected for promotion to lieutenant commander could get that much for agreeing to stay in the service for five years under a 2018 retention bonus program, according to a Navy administrative message released this week.

Three-year commitments could net pilots bonuses of up to \$90,000, depending on which air-

craft they fly. The bonus program also offers senior pilots \$100,000 for a commitment to serve three more years, including a tour as an installation commander, according to the message.

Naval officers with the rank of commander are the top leaders and flag officers of tomorrow, Navy personnel chief Vice Adm. Robert Burke said in the message.

"Their skills and leadership experience are essential to the success of the Navy," he said. "Our return on investment is the retention for continued Navy service of our aviation warfighters, with

their invaluable, irreplaceable skill sets and leadership."

The Navy is facing acute shortages of strike fighter, electronic attack and helicopter mine countermeasure pilots, said Burke, who testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee on military readiness last month.

"Each did not retain sufficient numbers of O-4 (lieutenant commander) pilots to meet all operational department head requirements in our aviation squadrons," he said in his testimony. "Navy is applying a combination of monetary and nonmonetary

incentives focused on meeting aviator career expectations and quality of life/service."

The Navy said the bonuses are needed to stem pilot losses to the civilian sector.

"We asked Aviators of all ranks how we should modernize and improve moving forward," Capt. Michael Baze, head of aviation career management at Naval Personnel Command, said in a press release. "Aviators reported they wanted our programs to be more flexible, merit-based and competitive with civilian opportunities. We took that feedback seriously,

incorporating each of these elements in the program changes you see here today."

Cmdr. Thomas Bodine, a former TOPGUN instructor now serving as an executive fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, said the incentives show that the service is willing to reward aviators who excel.

"The decision to remain in the Navy or to separate is a deeply personal one," he said. "The new bonus payouts are concrete proof that the Navy values its aircrew."

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Marine commandant orders new probe of harassment claims at Quantico

By TOM VANDEN BROOK
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Marine Corps Commandant Robert Neller has ordered a new investigation into allegations of sexual harassment brought by two civilian employees against a Marine officer, according to a Marines statement.

The allegations, first reported by USA Today last month, include sexually explicit overtures to the women dating to 2013 at their office on the base at Quantico, known as the "Crossroads of the Marine Corps." The women maintain the Marine Corps had minimized their concerns.

The new investigation was ordered on March 9, two days after the paper reported on complaints of a toxic work environment at the Marine and Family Program Division where the women work.

The new probe will focus on the complaints of Sherry Yetter and Traci Sharpe. They allege that Maj. David Cheek arranged to meet them privately on several occasions on the base and showed them his erection through his clothing. Cheek has

denied that the incidents took place.

"An investigating officer was appointed to re-investigate the sexual harassment allegations previously made by Ms. Yetter and Ms. Sharpe," Maj. Garron Garn, a Marine Corps spokesman, said in a statement.

"The investigating officer may examine any evidence related to the allegations. For privacy considerations, no additional details regarding the investigation are available for release at this time."

The complaints of Yetter and Sharpe, along with others about discrimination and bad bosses, spurred the Marine Corps to launch an inspector general's investigation in 2015 into the climate at the Marine and Family Program Division.

Among its findings was that Marine Col. Ernest Ackles, who had investigated a sexual harassment claim made by Sharpe, had later counseled himself for harassing the wife of the unit's chaplain, referring to her as "eye candy." The report also showed that one civilian official was paid to leave quietly after complaints that she had created a hostile work environment. The Marines then

rehired that official as a contractor to work in the same office less than two years later.

"The Marines should reinvestigate these allegations, but that is step one of one hundred," said Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., a member of the Armed Services Committee. "The Marines have a problem with this case, with the way they staff and run the Marine and Family Program Division in at least one location, and with a broader culture of rot that fosters an environment rife with sexual harassment and violence. I look forward to being briefed by Marine leadership on the next 99 steps."

Yetter is now the senior coordinator for sexual assault response for the Marine Corps' recruiting command. She renewed her complaints last year after Cheek was assigned to the building where she works. Her husband, Lt. Col. Gregg Yetter, also works in the same facility.

Yetter was encouraged by the new investigation. Before she learned of it, she had concerns about retaliation against her and her husband.

"But today, with this news I feel a little

more validated; I feel a little more heard, and I now have a little more hope that the true change for all victims of sexual harassment just might be coming after all," she said.

Sharpe was less hopeful.

"While this may sound like great news on the surface, my claims have been investigated and swept under the rug three times already," Sharpe said. "I remain cautiously optimistic that I will see true justice served this time."

A new investigation was necessary, said Scott Jensen, CEO of Protect Our Defenders, an advocacy group for victims of sexual assault in the military, and a retired Marine colonel.

"This is the only right decision to ensure justice was in fact served," Jensen said. "These cases took way too long and too much outside pressure to ensure they were taken seriously. I hope this signals a change in leadership priorities and greater emphasis on ensuring those who need and deserve fair treatment and due process in their cases get it."

TODAY IN STRIPES

American Roundup 18
Business/Weather 20
Classified 50-51
Comics/Crossword 42, 46-47
Faces 43
Opinion 44-45
Sports 54-64
Weekend 21-42

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PACIFIC

Drill: Amid concerns of chaos, 'there is work to be done'

FROM FRONT PAGE

Adm. Harry Harris, the head of the Hawaii-based Pacific Command, said during a House Armed Services Committee hearing last month that Army Pacific at Fort Shafter has been tasked with updating the evacuation plan for South Korea.

Harris was responding to a question by Rep. Anthony Brown, D-Md., who expressed concern about flaws in the current plan.

"I don't get the sense that the rehearsals, the walkthroughs, the soup to nuts had been thought through logistically," Brown, a retired Army Reserve colonel, said. He noted the evacuation would likely be happening at the same time additional troops were flowing onto the peninsula.

Harris acknowledged that "there is work to be done."

"If conflict breaks out on the Korean Peninsula then we're going to have to get Americans off of there. The numbers are staggering," he said, giving estimates of 200,000-plus American civilians in addition to more than 1 million Chinese and 60,000 Japanese who would also be looking for a way out.

"Our friends, allies, partners and others also have a vested interest in the evacuation of non-combatants should war break out on the peninsula," Harris told lawmakers at the Feb. 14 hearing without elaborating.

NEO under scrutiny

The State Department has the overall responsibility for noncombatant evacuation operations, but the military would carry them out. That means carrying out exercises on a routine basis to examine everything from the tactical level, such as assembly points, to operational and strategic aspects, Army Pacific spokesman Col. Christopher Garver said.

"The plans needed an update because the scope and scale of the situation continues to grow and because the war plans themselves have evolved over time," he said Thursday in an email. The issue has taken on urgency as North Korea demonstrated rapid progress toward its goal of developing a nuclear weapon that could reach the U.S. mainland.

It test-fired several missiles last



Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

Soldiers based throughout the Korean Peninsula take part in a noncombatant evacuation operation exercise in spring 2017.

year that appeared to be within reach of U.S. bases in South Korea, Japan and possibly Guam, although experts are divided over how close it is to perfecting the logistics needed to actually strike.

Trump responded by mocking Kim as "little rocket man" and threatening to unleash "fire and fury" and to "totally destroy North Korea" if necessary to defend the U.S. and its allies.

In December, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said it was getting too dangerous to keep noncombatants in South Korea and even suggested making the country an unaccompanied post, meaning servicemembers could not bring family with them.

The U.S. military quickly said it has no plans to initiate evacuations, while saying the safety and welfare of troops, civilian staff and loved ones are top priorities and contingency plans are in place.

The Financial Times reported that officials vetting Korea expert Victor Cha as a possible nominee to be the U.S. ambassador in Seoul asked if he was prepared to help manage the evacuation of American citizens, a move that would almost certainly send a signal to the North that military action was

imminent.

Cha later cited the dangers facing Americans as he expressed reservations about a military strike in an op-ed in The Washington Post.

"Given that an evacuation of so many citizens would be virtually impossible under a rain of North Korean artillery and missiles (potentially laced with biochemical weapons), these Americans would most likely have to hunker down until the war was over," he wrote.

Testing capabilities

The semiannual drills, Focused Passage in the spring and Courageous Channel in the fall, are mainly aimed at testing plans and making sure family members of troops and civilians working for the military are ready to go at a moment's notice.

The process appears orderly as spouses and children with backpacks and go-bags file through stations set up in gyms and other assembly points on the main U.S. bases. Soldiers check their information packets, and staff from the Red Cross and other departments are on hand to answer questions about pets, vehicles and other concerns.

Yongsan Garrison offered free helicopter rides to encourage participation last year. A select group was flown to Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo.

This year about 100 people will travel all the way to the United States, according to people familiar with the call for volunteers. All spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to release the information.

U.S. Forces Korea spokesman Col. Chad Carroll declined to comment on NEO participants or specific movements, citing operational security.

He also dismissed concerns that Focused Passage would coincide this year with the joint war games known as Foal Eagle and Key Resolve, which were delayed until after the Olympics and Paralympics, which ended March 18.

"Therefore, the Combined Forces Command is confident in our ability to conduct this routine training," Carroll said.

Experts warn the reality would be chaos, with millions of Koreans and foreigners streaming south. A key uncertainty is what will happen with the hundreds of thousands of nonmilitary Americans in South Korea, including tourists.

"The drills are probably a 10th

of a percent of the people or less who would be moving," said Bruce Bennett, a Rand Corp. defense analyst who was in Seoul this week. "The other thing to remember is that we're moving just Americans in the drills and in practice we'd be moving multiple nationalities, including likely the Japanese."

"You'd have to move through a Korea where many Koreans would also be moving to get out," Bennett said, adding that the Chinese would also be rushing to buy up space in planes and ferries to get their people out. "We would require some major coordination."

He said North Korean missiles also could threaten air bases and assets needed to lift people off the peninsula and pointed out that any plan to take people first to nearby bases in Japan would be complicated by political concerns as Tokyo would have to worry about its own people in South Korea.

"The bottom line is that they discovered that they had a plan which was in trouble, which was not in great shape," he said.

The U.S. Embassy doesn't provide details about evacuation plans but "encourages all U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Korea to register" with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, known as STEP, which can be done online. It notes the consular section's website also has relevant information.

An actual NEO would ideally be the last step. The first thing to watch for would be an authorized departure for American citizens, which would be announced to allow people to leave by commercial means.

In another complication, Focused Passage will coincide this year with the joint war games known as Foal Eagle and Key Resolve, which are due to begin on April 1 after being delayed until after the Feb. 9-25 Winter Olympics and the March 9-18 Paralympics.

USFK dismissed concerns, saying the annual exercises are the culmination of many months of planning. "Therefore, the Combined Forces Command is confident in our ability to conduct this routine training," Carroll said.

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Finland: US, Koreans hold 'constructive' diplomatic talks

By JARI TANNER
Associated Press

Finland's government said Wednesday that delegates from North Korea, South Korea and the United States concluded "constructive" unofficial diplomatic talks in the Nordic country that were widely believed to be laying the groundwork for an upcoming meeting between the Koreans and a planned U.S.-North Korea summit.

The Finnish Foreign Ministry said in a brief statement that the tripartite talks were held in a positive atmosphere and were

aimed at "building confidence and reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula."

Many observers believe the Finland meeting was geared toward preparing an upcoming summit between the leaders of the Koreans and a planned meeting between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Eighteen delegates, six from each country, plus observers from the United Nations and Europe attended the secretive two-day talks at a 19th-century manor house just outside Helsinki. The gathering kicked off Monday eve-

ning with dinner at a Helsinki restaurant where the delegations were seen arriving.

Media were largely kept in the dark about the identities of the delegates and issues on the table, apart from Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini saying Tuesday that denuclearization wasn't on the agenda.

What is known, however, is that senior North Korean diplomat Cho Kang Il, who handles North American affairs for his government, was among delegates from Pyongyang, while the U.S. delegation is believed to have included Kathleen Stephens, the former

U.S. ambassador to South Korea.

It was the first in a series of planned meetings between the Koreans and the U.S. involving official talks between current and former officials, and academics. The meetings are likely to be important for establishing summit expectations and possibly even agenda items.

The Helsinki talks took place just a few days after North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho concluded separate diplomatic talks in neighboring Sweden on Saturday.

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto said Monday that his coun-

try, which has a long history of hosting international summits, received a request to host the meeting "through middlemen."

"We're happy to host it and hope that discussions can bring issues forward," he told reporters before the talks.

Senior South Korean officials who recently visited North Korea's capital said that Kim agreed to hold talks with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in late April. They said Kim also proposed meeting with Trump.

Trump then agreed to meet Kim by the end of May.

MILITARY



PHOTOS BY MARTIN EGNASH/Stars and Stripes

American, French and Belgian soldiers work together during Exercise Citadelle Guibert at Mourmelon-le-Grand, France, on Wednesday.

Calif. Guard uses 'revolution' in Europe as Afghan primer

By MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

MOURMELON-LE-GRAND, France — After a tyrannical governor declares his state an independent country, terrorist groups spring up all over Northern Europe, while chemical attacks and fuel dumps set ablaze become the norm.

It's up to the California National Guard and its NATO allies to quell the violence in the fictitious Scandinavian nation of Armland during Exercise Citadelle Guibert this week.

It's as realistic a tabletop drill as possible, but with the welcome addition of a few creature comforts: namely, some multicolored, pillowy macarons.

"It's been kind of funny to see such serious soldiers, robust with intense situations, while nibbling on delicate little French pastries," Army spokeswoman Maj. Cara Kupcho said Wednesday. "One great thing about this being in France is we have good coffee available, and the French just flood the place with amazing cookies."

In a few months, simulations and haute cuisine will give way to deployment in Afghanistan for many of the 200 40th Infantry Division guardsmen working in this NATO exercise, commanded by the French Rapid Reaction Corps not far from the World War I battlefield of Verdun.

The drill is designed to prepare the 1st French Division, which heads to Africa this summer, and the guardsmen for the decisions they might face in a combat zone complicated by asymmetrical warfare and political instability.

"This reflects the world we live in," said French exercise commander Lt. Gen. Thierry Corbet. "(Troops) have to be able to lead operations in a context of a host nation internal crisis as well as in a high-intensity environment, and they have to be ready to [face] a robust and possibly hybrid enemy, and work in close coordination with the host nation."

The scenario started with conventional warfare but quickly moved into putting down riots, and stopping insurgent attacks aimed at discrediting and driving away the NATO team.

"I think there are a lot of parallels to what's going on in Afghanistan," said Lt. Col. James Lamb, an intelligence officer at the exercise. "The militaries we're facing have different agendas. They aren't one coherent enemy, and each is trying to achieve a different goal."

Identifying and taking out insurgent groups was a challenge for the multinational task force. For U.S. soldiers, learning about communications pitfalls among allies has been particularly enlightening.

"It's a little frustrating when we want to eliminate an enemy target," said fires support coordinator Lt. Col. Vincent Salazar. "If we were operating on our own, once we confirm that they are the enemy and we get the approval to engage, we can take them out."

"But here, when we report an enemy, they might assign soldiers from one of our allies to take them



French and U.S. soldiers walk during the exercise.

out. That's fine, and I'm sure they're making the right call, but sometimes they don't tell us what happened to them. And we want to know if the enemy sniper is still there, if the (bomb) factory is still functional. We're used to engaging our own targets."

The soldiers also spoke with media actors and met with leaders of the fictitious country.

Linda Rose Smit, a role player who portrayed several of Armland's governors, said she did not make it easy on the NATO forces.

"I have to make it real for me and really live in Armland during the exercise," Smit said. "That way, when I deal with the Americans or French, they are immersed in it."

Capt. David Majestic, a supply officer with the 40th Infantry Division, said he thought the exercise would help his unit in Afghanistan.

"I'll be doing sort of the same thing there as I am here," Majestic said. "And all this work with our NATO partners is great for us to learn how to operate coherently."

It wasn't all insurgent attacks and angry governors, though. Guardsmen took advantage of a day off to see Paris and other parts of France.

"Some of our soldiers never left the country before this," said Col. Michael Leeney, the division's chief of staff. "A lot never even left California. For a young soldier to come here and experience Europe like this, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Training so close to famous battlefields turned up unexpected surprises for the Californians.

"When we visited one of the (WWI) cemeteries, one of the first graves we saw, was from a soldier with the 40th Infantry Division," Leeney said.

Knowing their unit fought in this area 100 years ago, the guardsmen found another grave from a soldier with their division within minutes.

"It was kind of eerie to find them there," Leeney said. "But it shows you the kind of history our division has and exemplifies the strong bond we have with all our allies around the world."

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Baumholder will move families if water is unsafe

By WILL MORRIS
Stars and Stripes

BAUMHOLDER, Germany — The Army will test homes with brown-colored water for safety and move residents suffering from related health issues, garrison officials said this week after community concerns over detection of Legionella bacteria in water pipes.

After weeks of heated online discussions about tainted water, mold, mildew, sewage problems and other issues in base family housing, soldiers and dependents stationed at Baumholder described their living conditions to U.S. Army Garrison Rheinland-Pfalz leaders Tuesday night at a town hall meeting on base.

Garrison Commander Col. Keith Igyarto listened to soldiers and family members describe the colored water their families drink and are forced to use to bathe.

Igyarto responded as he has at other times — saying the water is safe — and outlined testing methods used on base to ensure clean water.

Igyarto said the solution is for residents to run the water until it is clear before they drink it.

"What I am telling you is that it is perfectly safe," he said. "But don't drink it because it's going to taste nasty; flush it out."

"If you are concerned, you've got sick kids and all the sudden they are breaking out in rashes, let us come in and test your water. Take your kids to the clinic and have them tested," Igyarto said, and if there is a problem, "we'll move you out."

Many of the housing units on Baumholder were constructed in the 1950s. Several residents at the meeting said they spend \$50 a month for water delivery because the building water is unsuitable for cooking and drinking.

Earlier this month, the Army announced multiple positive readings in Baumholder housing areas for Legionella bacteria, which causes Legionnaires' disease.

Positive readings were later found at a military hospital in Landstuhl in two areas, though in both cases officials stressed that no one has tested positive for the illness, a severe form of pneumonia, in at least 10 years at the military's Europe facilities. The tests began this year after a German mandate.

Social media sites erupted with criticism about how the Army was addressing the bacteria problem, the water and quality-of-life issues in the housing units.

Igyarto said he empathizes with those living in family housing.

"I share your pain, I share your frustrations; we'll do everything we can," he said. "But what I don't want you to do is leave here thinking that, one, we're covering something up ... secondly, if you've got a problem, let us know."

Army spouse Katrina Shepard said she believed that the leadership was listening, but like many others at the meeting, she is waiting to see whether the conditions change.

Since moving to Baumholder, her 4-year-old daughter has suffered from numerous skin conditions, which she believes are caused by the water in her apartment. She is currently waiting on test results.

"It seems like they have taken a lot of initiative to find out what is bothering people ... and work on things to fix them," Shepard said. "I think they have a greater understanding of what is going on now."

Igyarto "seemed genuinely shocked about some of the things people were saying."

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MILITARY

Woman to command student corps at Citadel

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

A woman will become regimental commander of cadets at The Citadel in South Carolina for the first time in the military college's 175-year history.

Sarah Zorn will lead the South Carolina Corps of Cadets as regimental commander, the highest-ranking cadet officer, who commands the entire 2,350-student corps, the Military College of South Carolina said Tuesday.

"My attention will be fully committed to leading the South Carolina Corps of Cadets according to our core values of honor, duty, and respect," Zorn said in the college's announcement. "It is my goal to empower our officers



Sarah Zorn

to become the best servant-leaders they can be."

The announcement, made by the Office of the Commandant,

came on the day of The Citadel's 175th anniversary.

The Corps of Cadets was all-male until Shannon Faulkner was admitted in 1995 after successfully suing the school in court. She faced a daunting matriculation, escorted on the campus at first by U.S. Marshals. She dropped out within the first week after suffering from heat exhaustion during initial training.

Male cadets on campus openly celebrated her departure, The Washington Post reported at the time.

In August 1996, four more women were admitted to The Citadel, but two dropped out after completing one semester, alleging they'd been hazed. Families of the two women reached settle-

ments with the college several years later, according to the college's website.

More than 80 women entered as Citadel freshman in 2016, the website said.

Zorn will serve as regimental commander during the 2018-19 academic year.

Zorn, a junior from Warrenville, S.C., is majoring in business administration and attending The Citadel on an Army scholarship, the college said. She is a member of the regimental staff, serving as regimental sergeant major.

"Cadet Zorn has fully embraced the cadet experience, excelling in academics, character, military and fitness," Lt. Gen. John Rosa, The Citadel's 19th president, said in the announcement. "The regi-

mental commander and the cadet leadership team set the tone for the South Carolina Corps of Cadets, and Cadet Zorn has shown she's the perfect choice for this leadership opportunity."

About a third of the school's cadet graduates are commissioned as officers in the military, according to the college.

Among the college's better known alumni are Gen. William Westmoreland, who commanded U.S. forces during the Vietnam War; Maj. Gen. Lewie Merritt, a pioneering World War II Marine Corps aviator; and Gen. William Brice, the youngest Marine Corps general in World War II.

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WWII-era ordnance uncovered at Yokosuka construction site

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Some Yokosuka residents and personnel were ordered to shelter in place Thursday after unexploded ammunition from World War II was found at a child development center construction site.

Emergency workers responded to the scene and cleared the area around the site near Fourth Avenue and Gridley Lane "out of an abundance of caution," according to a statement from the base. The construction site is surrounded by several residential buildings.

Officials said they found 25 mm anti-aircraft shells, which Navy Explosive Ord-

nance Disposal personnel determined to be inert. The area was deemed safe, and no one was injured.

Officials did not say where the shells came from. The Imperial Japanese Navy was known to use 25 mm anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns in the 1930s and 1940s.

Leftover ordnance is commonly found throughout Asia and the Pacific. In 2016, a

5-inch unexploded shell from an American warship was uncovered at a construction site near Camp Kinser, Okinawa, and a contractor discovered 12 Imperial Japanese Navy mines in an ordnance area at Sasebo Naval Base.

Stars and Stripes reporter Tyler Havac contributed to this report.
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MILITARY



Final edition

PHOTOS BY MARCUS FICHTL/Stars and Stripes

A worker inspects a Morning Calm newspaper Wednesday at a printing press at Bucheon, South Korea.

Army prints its last Morning Calm newspaper in South Korea

By MARCUS FICHTL
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The final edition of the Morning Calm, the last surviving Army newspaper in South Korea, ran off the press Wednesday evening.

A peninsula-wide institution, the bi-weekly Morning Calm detailed the lives of soldiers from Busan in the south to Camp Casey near the Demilitarized Zone.

It went the same way as many struggling newspapers in a wired world of instant shares and likes when Eighth Army commander Lt. Gen. Michael Bills declined to renew its contract this month.

Closing the paper will give public affairs staff more time to focus on local news and to communicate with communities online, said Camp Humphreys spokesman Bob McElroy.

“They all felt that the time they devoted to the paper would be better used to focus on their communities rather than producing articles and photos that were outdated by the time the paper came out every two weeks,” he said.

The newspaper, financed with advertising sold by its commercial publisher, didn’t cost the Army anything, McElroy said, but its production was time-consuming. His shop alone spent 50 hours on each publication. That time will be better spent on digital apps and social media, he said.

The Morning Calm was the last of a long line of newspapers that provided



Morning Calm newspaper plates are placed onto a printing press in Bucheon on Wednesday.

See a video about the production of the last Morning Calm newspaper
starsandstripes.com/go/morningcalm



command-approved news on the peninsula since before the Korean War.

When it launched in 2002, it absorbed older titles such as the Yongsan Garrison’s Seoul Word and the Southern Star

in Daegu, sparing only the 2nd Infantry Division’s Indianhead, which became a monthly magazine in 2012.

“The Morning Calm was the brainchild of Dennis Bohannon,” said John Nowell, who worked at the newspaper from 2002 to 2007. Bohannon, a public affairs officer, founded the Southern Star and then pushed for the countrywide newspaper,



A worker holds the last Morning Calm newspaper printed Wednesday at Bucheon.

Nowell said.


“It was a challenge in that we would have to get input from all [of South Korea],” he said. “It got stories out that people were not aware of in the other areas.”

A peninsula-wide publication let people in Busan or Daegu know what was happening at Camp Casey, Red Cloud or Yongsan, said Nowell, adding that he’d miss the feel of a fresh Army paper without the Morning Calm.

“It was a great paper,” he said.

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Military doctors treat Iraqi forces as ISIS fights on


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WAR ON TERRORISM

Iraq holds more than 19K over terrorism ties

Mass incarceration spurs fears about justice, recruiting

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
AND SUSANNAH GEORGE
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq has detained or imprisoned at least 19,000 people accused of connections to Islamic State or other terrorism-related offenses and sentenced more than 3,000 of them to death, according to an analysis by The Associated Press.

The mass incarceration and the speed of guilty verdicts raise concerns over potential miscarriages of justice — and worries that jailed militants are recruiting within the general prison population to build new extremist networks.

The AP count is based partially on an analysis of a spreadsheet listing all 27,849 people imprisoned in Iraq as of late January, provided by an official who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. Thousands more also are believed to be held in detention by other bodies, including the Federal Police, military intelligence and Kurdish forces. Those exact figures could not be obtained immediately.

The AP determined that 8,861 of the prisoners listed in the spreadsheet were convicted of terrorism-related charges since the beginning of 2013 — arrests overwhelmingly likely to be linked to ISIS, according to an intelligence figure in Baghdad.

In addition, another 11,000 people currently are being detained by the intelligence branch of the Interior Ministry, undergoing interrogation or awaiting trial, a second intelligence official said. Both intelligence officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

“There’s been great overcrowding ... Iraq needs a large number of investigators and judges to resolve this issue,” Fadhil al-Gharwari, a member of Iraq’s parliament-appointed human rights commission, told the AP.

Al-Gharwari said many legal proceedings have been delayed because the country lacks the resources to respond to the spike in incarcerations.

Large numbers of Iraqis were detained during the 2000s, when the U.S. and Iraqi governments were battling Sunni militants, including al-Qaida, and Shiite militias. In 2007, at the height of the fighting, the U.S. military held 25,000 detainees. The spreadsheet obtained by the AP showed that about 6,000 people arrested on terrorism charges before 2013 still are serving those sentences.

But the current wave of detentions has hit the Iraqi justice system much harder because past arrests were spread out over a much longer period and the largest numbers of detainees were held by the American military, with only a portion sent to Iraqi courts and the rest released.

Human Rights Watch warned in November that the broad use of terrorism laws meant those with minimal connections to ISIS are caught up in prosecutions alongside those behind the worst abuses. The group estimated a similar number of detainees and prisoners — about 20,000 in all.

“Based on all my meetings with senior



BRAM JANSSEN/AP

At a Kurdish screening center in Dibis, Iraq, on Oct. 3, men face a wall so they can't see security officers trying to determine if they are associated with Islamic State.

government officials, I get the sense that no one — perhaps not even the prime minister himself — knows the full number of detainees,” said Belkis Wille, the organization’s senior Iraq researcher.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who is running to retain his position in national elections slated for May, repeatedly has called for accelerated death sentences for those charged with terrorism.

“The Americans freed their captives; under Iraq, they will all receive the death penalty.”

Iraq Interior Ministry official

The spreadsheet analyzed by the AP showed that 3,130 prisoners have been sentenced to death on terrorism charges since 2013.

Since 2014, about 250 executions of convicted ISIS members have been carried out, according to the Baghdad-based intelligence official. About 100 of those took place last year, a sign of the accelerating pace of hangings.

The United Nations has warned that fast-tracking executions puts innocent people at greater risk of being convicted and executed, “resulting in gross, irreversible miscarriages of justice.”

The rising number of those detained and imprisoned reflects the more-than-four-year fight against ISIS, which first formed in 2013 and conquered nearly a third of Iraq and neighboring Syria the next year.

Iraqi and Kurdish forces, backed by a U.S.-led coalition, eventually rolled the group back on both sides of the border, regaining nearly all of the territory by the end of last year.

Throughout the fighting, Iraq has pushed thousands of ISIS suspects through trials

in counterterrorism courts. Trials witnessed by the AP and human rights groups often took no longer than 30 minutes.

The vast majority were convicted under Iraq’s Terrorism Law, which has been criticized as overly broad.

Asked about the process, Saad al-Hadithi, a government spokesman, said, “The government is intent that every criminal and terrorist receive just punishment.”

The largest concentration of those with ISIS-related convictions is in Nasiriyah Central Prison, about 200 miles southeast of Baghdad, a sprawling, maximum-security complex housing more than 6,000 people accused of terrorism-related offenses.

Cells designed to hold two prisoners now hold six, according to a prison official who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations. The official said overcrowding makes it difficult to segregate prisoners charged with terrorism and that an inadequate number of guards means ISIS members are openly promoting their ideology inside the prison.

Though prisoners at Nasiriyah were banned last year from giving sermons and recruiting fellow inmates, the official said he still witnesses prisoners circulating extremist religious teachings.

In wards holding mostly terrorism-related convicts, high-ranking ISIS members have banned prisoners from watching television. Many refuse to eat meat from the cafeteria, believing it hasn’t been prepared according to religious guidelines, the prison official said.

The relative free rein for extremists is reminiscent of Bucca Prison, a now-closed facility that the U.S. military ran in southern Iraq in the 2000s.

The facility produced a petri dish in which militant detainees mingled — including the man who now leads ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who spent months there, joining with other militants who became promi-

nent in the group.

Iraqi officials said they have taken steps to prevent a repeat of the Bucca phenomenon.

“We will never allow Bucca to happen again,” said an Interior Ministry official overseeing the detention of ISIS suspects in the Mosul area, also speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

“The Americans freed their captives; under Iraq, they will all receive the death penalty,” he said.

Cellphone signal jammers are installed at prisons holding ISIS suspects. But in Nasiriyah, the prison official said inmates appear to remain in contact with the outside.

He recounted how just days after a guard disciplined a senior ISIS member in the prison, the man threatened the guard’s family, listing the names and ages of his children.

The imprisonments hit hard among Iraq’s Sunni Arab minority, threatening to worsen tensions with the Shiite-dominated government. The community was both the pool that ISIS drew recruits from and the population most brutally victimized by its rule.

Mass incarcerations under former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki led to widespread resentment among Sunnis, helping fuel the growth of ISIS.

The head of the International Red Cross, an organization that regularly visits prison and detention facilities in Iraq, warned that mass detentions often incite futile cycles of violence.

“It’s the tortures, the ill treatments, the continuous long-term bad conditions in detentions which have radicalized a lot of actors which we find again as armed actors on the battlefield,” ICRC President Peter Maurer said during a recent visit to Iraq.

NATION



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE TEMPE (ARIZ.) POLICE DEPARTMENT/AP

This image made from video taken Sunday by a mounted camera shows an exterior view moments before an Uber SUV hit a woman in Tempe, Ariz.

Experts: Uber SUV's autonomous system should have seen woman

By TOM KRISHER
AND JACQUES BILLEAUD
Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Two experts say video of a deadly crash involving a self-driving Uber vehicle shows the sport utility vehicle's laser and radar sensors should have spotted a pedestrian, and computers should have braked to avoid the crash.

Authorities investigating the crash in a Phoenix suburb released the video of Uber's Volvo striking a woman as she walked from a darkened area onto a street.

Experts who viewed the video told The Associated Press that the SUV's sensors should have seen the woman pushing a bicycle and should have braked before the impact.

Also, Uber's human backup driver appears on the video to be looking down before crash and appears startled about the time of the impact.

"The victim did not come out of nowhere. She's moving on a dark road, but it's an open road, so Lidar (laser) and radar should have detected and classified her" as a human, said Bryant Walker Smith, a University of South Carolina law professor who studies autonomous vehicles.

Sam Abelsmaad, an analyst for Navigant Research who also follows autonomous vehicles, said laser and radar systems can see in the dark much better than humans or cameras and that the pedestrian was well within the system's range.

"It absolutely should have been able to pick her up," he said. "From what I see in the video, it sure looks like the car is at fault, not the pedestrian."

The video could have a broad impact on autonomous vehicle research, which has been billed as the answer to cutting the 40,000 traffic deaths that occur annually in the U.S. in human-driven



This image made from video Sunday shows a human backup driver in the SUV who was looking down, then looked up and appeared startled during the last moment of the clip.

vehicles.

Proponents say that human error is responsible for 94 percent of crashes, and that self-driving vehicles would be better because they see more and don't get drunk, distracted or drowsy.

But the experts said it appears from the video that there was some sort of flaw in Uber's self-driving system.

The video, Smith said, may not show the complete picture, but "this is strongly suggestive of multiple failures of Uber and its system, its automated system, and its safety driver."

Tempe police, as well as the National Transportation Safety Board and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are investigating the Sunday night crash, which occurred outside a crosswalk on a darkened boulevard.

The crash was the first death involving a fully autonomous test vehicle. The Volvo was in self-driving mode traveling about 40 mph with a human backup driver at the wheel when it struck Elaine Herzberg, 49, police said.

The lights on the SUV did not illuminate Herzberg until a sec-

ond or two before impact, raising questions about whether the vehicle could have stopped in time.

Tempe Police Chief Sylvia Moir told the San Francisco Chronicle earlier this week that the SUV likely would not be found at fault.

But Smith said that from what he observed on the video, the Uber driver appears to be relying too much on the self-driving system by not looking up at the road.

"The safety driver is clearly relying on the fact that the car is driving itself. It's the old adage that if everyone is responsible, no one is responsible," Smith said. "This is everything gone wrong that these systems, if responsibly implemented, are supposed to prevent."

The experts were unsure if the test vehicle was equipped with a video monitor that the backup driver may have been viewing.

Uber immediately suspended all road-testing of such autos in the Phoenix area, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Toronto.

An Uber spokeswoman, reached Wednesday night by email, did not answer specific questions about the video or the expert observations.

Troopers to patrol at Fla. school in wake of massacre

By TERRY SPENCER
AND CURT ANDERSON
Associated Press

PARKLAND, Fla. — Already heightened security was being bolstered Thursday at the Florida high school that became the scene of a massacre last month, with Gov. Rick Scott ordering eight highway patrol troopers to help secure the grounds. The move came after the shooting suspect's brother was arrested on campus, two students were caught carrying knives and another made on-line threats.

Also, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students will be given clear backpacks they'll be required to use when they return from spring break on April 2. Broward County school district Superintendent Robert Runcie told parents in a two-page letter that metal detectors also could be installed soon, and he outlined other security upgrades including student ID badges and a district-wide effort to require all school visitors to enter through a single door.

The troopers will be stationed at the school indefinitely along with Broward County deputies, leaving an armed guard at every campus entrance point, Scott said in a statement.

Before the shooting, the school was patrolled by one armed deputy and unarmed guards. An unspecified number of deputies, some armed with rifles, were

added after the school reopened. "Parents, students and teachers have recently endured one of the worst tragedies in Florida history," Scott said. "They must be assured that every necessary step is being taken to increase safety and ensure no unauthorized people are allowed on campus."

The strengthened security comes three days after suspect Nikolas Cruz's younger brother, Zachary Cruz, was arrested on trespassing charges while riding his skateboard on campus.

Zachary Cruz, 18, is being held on \$500,000 bond and Broward County Judge Kim Theresa Mollica has approved a search of his home for weapons. The Broward Sheriff's Office wants him barred from possessing firearms and also involuntarily hospitalized for a mental health evaluation under a state law passed after the Feb. 14 shooting spree that killed 17.

Zachary and Nikolas, 19, both attended Stoneman Douglas. They shared the same biological mother but had different fathers. Both were adopted at very young ages by Roger and Lynda Cruz. Lynda Cruz died in November and their father died some years earlier.

Nikolas Cruz's attorney has said he will plead guilty to 17 counts of murder and 17 counts of attempted murder if prosecutors will waive the death penalty, which they have refused to do.

Police: Md. school shooter apparently a lovesick teen

By MATTHEW BARAKAT
AND BRIAN WITTE
Associated Press

GREAT MILLS, Md. — Tuesday's school shooting in southern Maryland that left the shooter dead and two students wounded increasingly appears to be the action of a lovesick teenager.

Authorities on Wednesday released a few additional details into the shooting at Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County.

Austin Rollins, 17, was killed after shooting a schoolmate, Jaelynn Willey, 16. A school resource officer got there within a minute and fired a shot, but it's not yet clear whether Rollins was killed by the officer's bullet or took his own life.

A 14-year-old boy who was shot in the thigh during the encounter was released from a hospital Wednesday.

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office said Wednesday that Rol-

lins and the girl had been in a relationship that recently ended. Authorities previously only had said that the two had had a relationship of some sort.

"All indications suggest the shooting was not a random act of violence," police said in a statement.

St. Mary's County Sheriff Tim Cameron said earlier that a precise determination of Rollins' motive may be impossible now that he is dead.

Jaelynn was still fighting for her life at the University of Maryland Prince George's Hospital Center. A fundraising page to help her family has raised more than \$54,000.

Hospital spokesman Michael Schwartzberg said in an email Wednesday night that she remained in critical condition.

Attempts to reach Rollins' family were unsuccessful.

NATION

Pacific storm brings record rain to Southern California

Los Angeles Times

MONTECITO, Calif. — A powerful storm moved into Southern California on Wednesday, drenching fire-ravaged neighborhoods and setting several new rainfall records for the day but so far not causing the damage and destruction some officials feared.

The storm marked a direct hit by an "atmospheric river" system but has proved to be less powerful than forecasters initially predicted. Still, they warned the heaviest downpour is yet to come on Thursday and urged residents to stay vigilant.

A flash-flood warning remained in effect for recent burn areas, despite scaled-back total rainfall projections. Forecasters are now expecting 2 to 4 inches of rain on the coasts and in the valleys of Santa Barbara and western Ventura counties, and 4 to 8 inches in the foothills and mountains across the state, said Sirard, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Oxnard, Calif., said.

The heaviest rainfall was expected Thursday morning, when there was a slight chance of thunderstorms over charred mountains that could drop up to an inch

of rain an hour, the weather service said. In Los Angeles County and eastern Ventura County, the storm is expected to dump 1 to 2 inches of rain on the coasts and in the valleys, and 3 to 5 inches in the mountains, Sirard said.

Officials said that several areas set new rainfall records for this date, including Oxnard, Santa Barbara and Palmdale.

Evacuation orders were still in effect for thousands of residents in Santa Barbara County. Among them was Mike Wyran, who was staying at a downtown Santa Barbara hotel Wednesday evening with his wife, daughter and dog.

Mike Eliason, public information officer for the Santa Barbara County Fire Department, gives updates on flooding conditions in the area.

During the deadly January storm, the Montecito family didn't evacuate and were stuck in their home for days. Since then, they've taken evacuation warnings seriously and are pleased that officials have been communicative.

Montecito resident Jaime Giffen, 52, decided not to evacuate. At the very worst, she said, she'd be without power and water, something she dealt with in January.

She's learned since then to keep her phone charged and to stock up on nonperishable food.

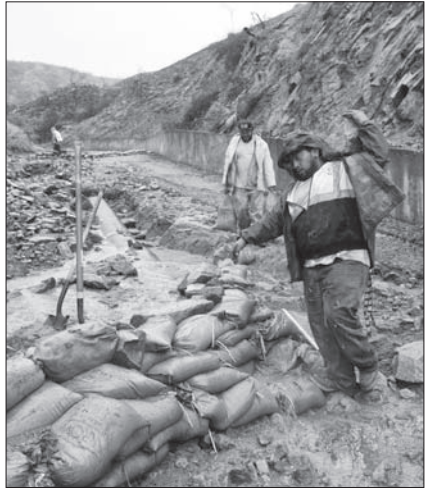
On Wednesday afternoon, mudslides had forced Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner train to stop south of Carpinteria as Union Pacific maintenance crews removed debris from the tracks. The railway was cleared after a roughly 45-minute delay, Amtrak said. The rain also triggered road closures near Ojai and along the coast.

In Montecito, where at least 21 people died in massive mud and debris flows on Jan. 9, crews were keeping close watch on debris basins, creeks and roadways for potential mudflow and debris.

Scott McGolpin, director of public works for Santa Barbara County, said, "There isn't a lot of debris. This is what we want."

Robert Lewin, director of the county's Office of Emergency Management, said workers have been reported moving along San Ysidro Creek, but so far they have remained within the channel.

In Los Angeles County, residents who live from the 8300 to 9000 blocks of La Tuna Canyon Road were still under a mandatory evacuation order because of debris flows.



HANS GUTKNECHT, LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS/AP

Workers place sandbags on a washed-out driveway on La Tuna Canyon Road in San Valley, Calif., on Wednesday. Thousands of people have been evacuated because of the threat of mudslides.

All other mandatory evacuation orders were lifted. Residents of Kagel Canyon, Lopez Canyon and Little Tujunga were allowed to return home, though shelters

will remain open for residents who feel unsafe returning home, said Helen Chavez, a spokeswoman for the multi-agency response to the storm.

Police release videos of fatal shooting of unarmed Calif. man

By DON THOMPSON
AND KATHLEEN RONAYNE
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Two officers yelled for a suspect to show his hands, then shouted "Gun! Gun! Gun!" moments before fatally shooting the man, who turned out to be unarmed, audio from body camera footage released by Sacramento police shows.

Footage from body cameras and an overhead helicopter does not clearly depict what the man, who was holding only a cellphone, was doing in the moments before the police fired Sunday night. The shooting happened in the backyard of the man's grandparents' home, where he was staying.

The Sacramento Police Department said the man, who was black, was seen breaking into vehicles and later into a neighbor's home. The break-ins were first reported by a 911 call also released to police.

The police said deputies in the helicopter saw the man break a neighbor's sliding glass door before jumping a fence. The helicopter video does not show the alleged break-in. It picks up as the man is running through a backyard and climbing over a fence into a neighboring property.

The helicopter briefly shows him in the backyard as the police are running up the driveway along the side of the house.

A flashlight from one body camera shows the backyard, but the man is not visible. "Gun, gun, gun," one of the officers yells before they begin shooting.

The helicopter footage shows the man collapsing as he is shot. It's unclear from the helicopter body camera video exactly how many shots were fired. Police previously said the officers fired 20 shots.

The department had said he advanced toward the officers holding an object in front of him. The officers thought he was pointing a handgun, police said.

When backup arrives, one of the officers who fired says, "We can't see his left hand." Someone suggests getting a nonlethal weapon before approaching.



RENEE C. BYER, THE SACRAMENTO (CALIF.) BEI/AP

Sequita Thompson recounts the horror of seeing her grandson, Stephan Alonzo Clark, dead in her backyard after he was shot by police.

"Let's hit him a couple of times with that before we uh..." the officer says, though it appears the suggestion was heeded.

As several officers approach, the man is seen lying face down with an iPhone near his head. He's handcuffed and the officers discuss performing CPR.

Mayor Darrell Steinberg said appropriate questions have been raised about the protocols for using force and rendering emergency aid during police shootings and they must be answered in the investigation.

Authorities have not released the man's name but Salena Manni, who said she was his fiancée, identified him as Stephan Alonzo Clark, 22, the father of her two sons, ages 1 and 3. The shooting has ignited questions by relatives, activists and others after it turned out he was holding only a cellphone.

"He was at the wrong place at the wrong time in his own backyard?" Clark's grandmother, Sequita Thompson, told The Sacramento Bee. "C'mon now, they didn't have to do that."

The department could not say how many times Clark was hit, and the coroner's office was not releasing information until his relatives were notified. The department said the two officers have been with Sacramento police for two and four years, but each has four years' previous experience with other law enforcement agencies. Both are on paid administrative leave.

New storm brings more winter woes to Northeast

By TED SHAFFREY
AND MICHAEL HILL
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The latest nor'easter lost some punch as it rolled into New England on Thursday as millions of others in the Northeast dug out from the storm that dumped more than a foot of snow in some places, knocked out power to tens of thousands of customers and had many wishing for more springlike weather.

"We're supposed to be getting ready for Easter, not a nor'easter," said Raene Dempsey, 46, as her daughter, Jadalynn, 6, pulled her toward a Philadelphia park so they could see the trees blanketed in freshly fallen snow.

Long Island took a hard hit, with Bay Shore and Patchogue leading the way with 19 inches of snow. While some parts of Pennsylvania saw more than a foot of snow, major cities along the Interstate 95 corridor saw much less. New York City's Central Park recorded about 8 inches while downtown Philadelphia got 7.

The storm weakened a bit in the early hours of Thursday, and Boston expected to escape with just a few inches of snow before it tapered off Thursday afternoon. Along the Massachusetts coast, winds gusted to 40 mph, and some towns dealt with flooding.

Airlines canceled more than 4,000 flights Wednesday but lumbered back into service Thursday.

On the ground, Amtrak scaled back service on the Northeast corridor between Washington and Boston and continued a modified schedule Thursday. At least two traffic deaths were reported in New Jersey and on New York's Long Island.

Patience wore thin as the fourth major storm in three weeks pounded the region.

"I want warm! I'm done with the cold," said Yana Damoiseau, a pedestrian in New York City.

In New Jersey, some streets flooded along the shore, including one in Point Pleasant Beach where a pair of ducks cruised back and forth through an intersection where a plastic garbage can bobbed in the waves. The state's major utilities reported slightly more than 75,000 customers without service early Thursday.

The storm also unloaded snow on Virginia and West Virginia as it pushed into the Northeast. Virginia reported more 240 traffic accidents.

But not everyone was sick of the snow.

In Orwigsburg, Pa., about 90 miles outside Philadelphia, Talia and Miles Broadhurst, both 10, made their own fun on yet another day off from school, climbing onto the family SUV and sliding down the snow-slicked windshield and hood before plopping onto the snow.



VIETNAM

AT

50

Explore **STARS AND STRIPES**® new feature section: Vietnam at 50.

With contributions from the men and women who were there, as well as voices from experts and our readers, we take a look back at the Vietnam War and the cultural changes that surrounded it. How the war was prosecuted, how it changed our military and foreign policy thinking, and how America viewed itself then and now. It's a radically new design for Stars and Stripes, and one you can help shape by sharing your thoughts and voices.

Visit online for more content and video—or to share your memories: stripes.com/vietnam50

NATION

House passes \$1.3 trillion spending bill

By MIKE DeBONIS
AND ERICA WERNER

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The House on Thursday passed a sweeping \$1.3 trillion spending bill that makes good on President Donald Trump's promises to increase military funding while keeping most of his proposed cuts to domestic programs and placing obstacles to his immigration agenda.

The 2,322-page bill, which was released just before 8 p.m. Wednesday, would keep government agencies operating through September. Congressional leaders muscled the bill through the chamber, tossing aside rules to ensure careful deliberation of legislation to meet a Friday night government shutdown deadline.

The bill includes dozens of miscellaneous provisions, ranging from crucial fixes to the recent GOP tax bill to a measure on employee tips to language codifying that minor-league baseball players are exempt from federal labor laws. The spending bill is widely expected to be the last major legislation that Congress will pass before the November midterm elections, which has increased pressure to jam the bill full of odds and ends.

It passed on a 256-167 vote after leaders of both parties hailed the compromise. At the White House, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said Trump would sign the bill.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said it fulfilled Trump's governing agenda, including by increasing military spending and funding a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"This bill starts construction on the wall," he told reporters. "It funds our war on opioids. It



Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, right, with White House Director of Legislative Affairs and Assistant Marc Short, talks to reporters Thursday. The House passed a \$1.3 trillion spending bill Thursday, which Mulvaney said President Donald Trump has indicated he will sign.

invests in infrastructure. It funds school safety and mental health. But what this bill is ultimately about, what we've fought for so long, is finally giving our military the tools and the resources it needs to do the job."

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., called the bill "a tremendous victory for the American people," one that keeps domestic agencies robustly funded while turning away Trump's push for more border wall and immigration enforcement money.

"If you want to think you're getting a wall, just think it and sign the bill," she said.

But there were plenty of grumbles in all corners of Capitol Hill about the rapid process that has left lawmakers and aides poring through text to see exactly what the bill will do. House GOP leaders waived their own rules requir-

ing any bill coming to the floor to be posted for at least three days, and none of the more than a dozen lawmakers surveyed Thursday said they had read the entire bill.

"There's no way humanly possible to read 2,232 pages," said Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., who is opposed to the bill. "Sometimes they jam you, but they pretend to give you three days to read it. All the veneer is off now."

Even Democrats who planned to support the compromise railed about the speed of the bill's consideration.

No matter what you think about the bill, this process is something we have to stand up and say is unacceptable," Rep. Jim McGovern, R-Mass., said on the House floor.

House Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions, R-Texas, acknowledged the circumstances

were not ideal.

"There was a good, hard work put into this, and the answer is we are going to move forward and take care of funding our military properly and the rest of the government," he said. "I, like you, see the frailties in what we do, and they're enormous and they're gaping holes, but we had to do what we had to do."

Besides the looming deadline, one consideration prompting the quick vote, congressional aides said, was the Friday funeral for the late Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-N.Y. Dozens of members are planning to fly to Rochester, N.Y., for the service.

Other lawmakers are set to leave on official delegations abroad as soon as Friday, aides said, taking advantage of the two-week congressional break for Easter and Passover.

Attention now turns to the Senate, where unanimous consent from all members would be needed to waive procedural rules and set up votes before the Friday midnight deadline.

That means any one senator could delay the proceedings and force a brief shutdown, much as Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., did in February, when he held up consideration of the previous budget bill.

Paul said Wednesday that he had not decided how he would handle the new bill, telling reporters that he would wait to read it first. But he made clear that he was unlikely to be pleased by its contents.

"I think it is safe to say that there are many voices in the Senate, including many Republicans, who are not real happy about having a thousand-page bill crammed down our throat at the last minute with not much time to read it," he said. "It's a really terrible, rotten, no-good way to run your government."

On Thursday morning, Paul tweeted that it had taken more than two hours to print out the bill so he could review it.

The bill's release was delayed for two days as leaders haggled over provisions sprinkled throughout the bill.

The bill includes \$1.6 billion in funding for construction of a border wall, but that number is far short of the \$25 billion in long-term Southern Border reset the administration sought. Democrats also won tight restrictions on how that money can be spent.

Trump declared victory for his priorities in a tweet late Wednesday. "Got \$1.6 Billion to start Wall on Southern Border reset. It will be forthcoming. Most importantly, got \$700 Billion to rebuild our Military, \$716 Billion next year. ... most ever. Had to waste money on Dem giveaways in order to take care of military pay increase and new equipment."

Military budget hike would usher in raises, new ships and planes

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — With a partial government shutdown looming, lawmakers on Capitol Hill were racing against the clock Thursday to approve a massive spending bill that fiscal 2018 includes more than \$650 billion in national defense spending.

The fifth temporary funding measure for fiscal 2018 runs out late Friday and would trigger the third federal shutdown this year. On Wednesday evening, Congress unveiled a \$1.3 trillion, 2,322-page bill that, if approved, would avert the shutdown. The House approved the plan Thursday afternoon.

The military portion of the spending bill includes a significant increase in the Pentagon budget that would include a 2.4 percent pay raise for servicemembers, fund new ships and aircraft and direct new spending on missile defense.

"After years of neglect, this body is taking the important step of reshaping and rebuilding the United States military," Rep. Pete Sessions, R-Texas, said Thursday in introducing the measure on the House floor. "It's far more than just national defense. It's also trying to give better protection to the men and women who protect

us. The men and women who today are in cold, lonely, hot, dangerous places around the globe."

The defense budget closely follows the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, which was passed last year and authorizes spending but doesn't actually appropriate the money. Since the fiscal year began Oct. 1, the government has been operating off a series of temporary funding measures.

The Department of Defense budget gained momentum last month when congressional members reached a two-year deal to bust budgetary caps that limited military spending this year to \$549 million. The spending bill, which funds the overall government including the military, directs \$23.8 billion for 14 new ships, \$10.2 billion for 90 Joint Strike Fighters and nearly \$1.8 billion for 24 F/A-18 Super Hornets.

The plan also allows for \$11.5 billion in spending for the Missile Defense Agency, \$1.6 billion for 30 Apache helicopters, \$1.1 billion for 56 Black Hawk helicopters and \$34.4 billion in defense health and military family programs.

"It makes a down payment on the buildup that has been advertised by defense hawks and the president," said Mark Cancian, a senior adviser at Center for Strategic and

International Studies, a Washington think tank. "They are putting their money where their mouth is."

The plan also directs spending increases in research and development, and reflects alignment with the National Defense Strategy to prepare the country for a potential fight against Russia and China.

"I'm encouraged by the [increases]," said Lauren Fish, a defense strategies research associate for the Center for a New American Security, another Washington think tank. "But the question, as always, comes down to whether we're buying advanced capabilities for that future fight or just more of the same. ... The proof will be in the pudding."

The House passed the plan by a vote of 256-167, sending the measure to the Senate for approval. The spending bill would then go to the president to sign.

Considering the potential for hours of debate, it was unclear Thursday whether members could avoid a shutdown. At least one member, Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., was threatening to repeat efforts that led to a brief government shutdown in February.

Paul and other members have raised concerns about the impact of increased spending, which is expected to fuel the deficit. The plan marks more than \$60

billion above 2017 spending levels, going beyond what was originally requested by President Donald Trump.

"I expect this bill to pass, and, in all likelihood, for a shutdown to be avoided," said Molly Reynolds, a governance studies fellow at the liberal-leaning Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank. "The biggest remaining obstacle is whether a single senator ... will hold up a vote in the Senate. He or one of his colleagues could do so, which would potentially push us past the ... deadline. If that happens, we could have a short-funding lapse, but probably not a multiday shutdown."

The overall boost in military funding comes in the wake of a deadly year for the U.S. military. More servicemembers have died in training efforts than in combat in the last year, defense hawks have said.

Last week, nine servicemembers were lost in equipment failures and crashes, said House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis.

"The military has been hollowed out for many years," Ryan said Thursday on the lower chamber's floor. "What this ultimately is about is giving our military the tools and resources it needs to do its job."

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NATION

VA reforms cut before vote on spending bill

By Nikki Wentling
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A deal collapsed Wednesday that would have included multiple Department of Veterans Affairs reforms in a spending bill that Congress formulated to prevent a government shutdown.

Earlier this week, the bill was set to contain a measure to overhaul the VA Choice program, which veterans use to access private-sector medical care. A deal reached between key House and Senate lawmakers on VA oversight also included an expansion of benefits for veteran caregivers, as well as a plan to initiate a systematic review of VA infrastructure, with the intention of disposing of aging and underused facilities nationwide.

When Congress unveiled its \$1.3 trillion, 2,232-page bill Wednesday evening, the VA reforms had been omitted.

Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., and Jon Tester, D-Mont., leaders on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, predicted earlier Wednesday that the reforms would not be included in the final version of the spending bill.

Tiffany Haverly, a spokeswoman for Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said Roe's team worked to push for the VA reforms up until the bill was released.

House Democrats were opposed to the deal.

Griffin Anderson, a spokesman for Democrats on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said they were against a measure to expand caregiver benefits because it didn't provide a clear way to fund those changes.

Benefits such as monthly stipends, respite care and counseling are now available only to caregivers of veterans injured after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which veterans and advocates say creates an unfair discrepancy. Changes to eligibility have been stalled for years in Congress because of the high cost of expanding benefits to more families.

For Democrats, expanding the benefits is a top priority, but not without funding, Anderson said.

"Yes the program would be authorized, but there would not be any money to fund this expansion," he wrote in an email.

Democrats also worried a measure to create an asset-review commission tasked with making decisions on VA facilities would severely limit Congress' authority to oversee VA infrastructure. They argued the measure didn't include funding to pay for infrastructure improvements.

Arguably the most pressing measure — and most debated — is the proposed change to the Choice program.

House Democrats believe the Choice overhaul included in the deal isn't enough of a revamp from the current program, Anderson said.



JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, left, speaks with Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., after testifying before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs on Wednesday.

The Choice program was created in 2014 in response to the VA wait-time scandal to ease demand on VA services by sending veterans into the private sector.

Negotiations of potential changes to the program have created disagreements and delays in Congress and highlighted divisions between VA leadership and White House insiders. The option of more choices in health care for veterans was a promise that President Donald Trump offered during his election campaign. The crux of the dispute is how far veterans' health care should be pushed into the private sector.

Everyone involved in negotiations seems to agree the next iteration of the program should do away with the rules that allow veterans to go into the private sector only when they live more than 40 miles' driving distance from a VA facility or have to wait longer than 30 days for an appointment.

But House Democrats think the Senate's proposal — the one intended for inclusion in the spending bill — "makes virtually

zero changes to eligibility from the current, arbitrary 30-day, 40-mile rule," Anderson said.

Roe wrote a letter Tuesday to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., urging her to support the VA reforms.

The measures also had the backing of eight large veterans organizations, all of which signed onto a letter to congressional leaders Monday encouraging the deal. They described the moment as a "historic opportunity" to pass multiple VA reforms at once.

On Wednesday afternoon, when it appeared the deal was falling apart, Carlos Fuentes, legislative director for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said his organization was disappointed the VA reforms wouldn't make the cut. The possibility of delaying the measures until summer or fall would be "unacceptable," he added.

Isakson said he wants to try again to pass the measures when lawmakers return from break in April. It's uncertain, though, when the issues could be taken up again. The reforms were twice

previously introduced in Congress as separate bills, but all of them have been deadlocked in recent months.

The spending bill would have provided a fast track for their approval.

"I would've liked to get it in there," Isakson said. "But the effort we've gone to has gotten everybody educated on the great job we've done to address three major concerns in the VA, so I think we'll get it done. Obviously, I'd love for it to be in the omnibus and be over, but it's a step forward in terms of what we're going to do with it."

The massive spending bill was delayed this week, held back by several hot-button initiatives vying to be tacked on as policy riders. Lawmakers must act by the end of Friday to avoid a partial government shutdown. The House approved the bill Thursday morning. The Senate must approve it before it's sent to the White House for Trump to sign.

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Mental health care for veterans with 'bad paper' in bill

By Nikki Wentling
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A measure to increase mental and behavioral health care for veterans with other-than-honorable discharges — services now denied to many of them through the Department of Veterans Affairs — is included in a massive spending bill that Congress unveiled Wednesday night.

The measure would require the VA to provide veterans with mental health screenings and care after they spent more than 100 days on active duty, even if they received other-than-honorable discharges. Veterans who served in a combat zone or area of hostilities, worked in support of a contingency operation, experienced military sexual trauma or worked as a drone operator would be eligible.

Advocates for veterans with other-than-honorable discharges, known as "bad paper," applauded

the measure as a positive step. It's estimated that tens of thousands of servicemembers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health conditions caused by their experiences in recent wars have been kicked out of the military with bad paper. The status often precludes them from receiving mental health care — and other benefits — from the Visteforo Goldsmith, founder of High Ground Veterans Advocacy and a longtime advocate for veterans with bad paper, said the measure "marks a major shift towards justice for those veterans who have for so long been denied it." Goldsmith is an Iraq War veteran with an other-than-honorable discharge.

The measure is part of a \$1.3 trillion spending package that Congress must approve by the end of Friday to avoid a partial federal government shutdown. If the bill is passed with the mea-

sure still included, Goldsmith said it would signal a shift away from unfairly denying mental health care to veterans who need it.

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., and Rep. Beto O'Rourke, D-Texas, introduced a measure, titled the "Honor Our Commitment Act," as companion bills in the House and Senate one year ago Thursday. Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., introduced another bill to expand mental health care for veterans, titled the "Urgent Access to Mental Health Care Act." They, along with Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont.; Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii; and Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., drafted the compromise this week that made it into the spending deal.

The measure expands on changes recently initiated by the VA to increase care for veterans with bad paper.

In July 2017, the VA began offering 90 days of mental health care to veterans with other-than-honorable discharges who were

in crisis situations. Since that was put into effect, more than 3,200 veterans have utilized the care, VA Secretary David Shulkin said recently.

When Shulkin announced the initiative last June, Murphy — and other critics — said 90 days wasn't enough.

"I'm glad the VA is going to start providing some care to these veterans ... but I still don't understand why they're choosing to limit that care to just 90 days," Murphy said at the time. "Ninety days is not a number based on any scientific evidence or best medical practices, and it's unacceptable that we're shutting them off from care they need."

On Thursday, Murphy said the measure included in the spending bill was a "critical expansion" of mental health care that would help hundreds of thousands of veterans.

The Government Accountability Office released findings

in 2017 that the Defense Department separated approximately 92,000 servicemembers for misconduct from 2011 through 2015, and 57,000 of them were diagnosed with PTSD, traumatic brain injury or other conditions that can change servicemembers' moods and behaviors and lead to disciplinary problems.

John Rowan, president of Vietnam Veterans of America, said the changes also had the potential to reach veterans of other eras.

"For far too long, we've seen veterans whose service was overwhelmingly honorable, but were denied help from the VA for a lifetime over administrative separations," Rowan said. "This provision of the omnibus will help veterans from the Vietnam War to the current Forever Wars and future conflicts and save so many of the untold lives of countless forgotten heroes."

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NATION



TOM REEL, THE SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS/AP

A robot is prepared for use Wednesday at the home where bombing suspect Mark Anthony Conditt lived in Pflugerville, Texas.

Despite video, police say Austin bomber's motive is unknown

By JIM WEINSTEIN
AND LILL VERTSEIT
Associated Press

PFLUGERVILLE, Texas — A 25-minute cellphone video left behind by the bomber whose deadly explosives terrorized Austin for weeks details the differences among the weapons he built and amounts to a confession, police said. But his motive remains a mystery.

Mark Anthony Conditt, 23, an unemployed college dropout who bought bomb-making materials at Home Depot, recorded the video hours before he died after detonating one of his own devices as SWAT teams closed in. It seemed to indicate he knew he was about to be caught, said Austin Police Chief Brian Manley.

"It is the outcry of a very challenged young man talking about challenges in his own life," Manley said of the recording, which authorities declined to release amid the ongoing investigation.

Conditt was tracked down using stove surveillance video, cellphone signals and witness accounts of a customer shipping packages in a disguise that included a blond wig and gloves. Police finally found him early Wednesday at a hotel in a suburb north of Austin.

Officers prepared to move in for an arrest. When the suspect's sport utility vehicle began to drive away, they followed. Conditt ran into a ditch on the side of the road, and SWAT officers approached, banging on his window.

Within seconds, the suspect had detonated a bomb inside his vehicle, blasting the officers backward, Manley said. One officer then fired his weapon at Conditt, the chief said. The medical examiner has not finalized the cause of death, but the bomb caused "significant" injuries, he said.

Law enforcement officials did not immediately say whether Conditt acted alone in the five bombings in the Texas capital and suburban San Antonio that killed two people and badly wounded four others. Fred Milanowski, of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, To-

bacco, Firearms and Explosives, said investigators were confident that "the same person built each one of these devices."

Investigators released few details about Conditt except his age and that he was white. Neighbors say he was home-schooled. He later attended Austin Community College from 2010 to 2012, according to a college spokeswoman, but he did not graduate.

In a 2012 online blog that the college spokeswoman said Conditt created as part of a U.S. government class project, he gives his opinion on several issues, often in response to someone else's commentary. Conditt wrote that gay marriage should be illegal, argued in favor of the death penalty and gave his thoughts on "why we might want to consider" eliminating sex offender registries.

In the "about me" section of the blog, Conditt wrote that he wasn't "that politically inclined" but did view himself as conservative.

Jay Schultze, who lives in Pflugerville, said he was jogging Tuesday night when he was stopped by police and asked about the bombings. He said police flew drones over Conditt's home for about six hours between Tuesday evening and early Wednesday morning.

Schultze described the home as "a weird house with a lot of people coming and going" and a bit rundown.

A neighbor who watched Conditt grow up said he always seemed smart and polite. Jeff Reeb said he has lived next to Conditt's parents for about 17 years and described them as good neighbors. Conditt had visited his parents regularly, he said.

Conditt's family released a statement saying they had "no idea of the darkness that Mark must have been in." His uncle, Mike Courtney, said his nephew was a "computer geek" who was intelligent and kind.

Breedlove: Russian election meddling 'a form of warfare'

By CLAUDIA GRISALES
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The former leader of U.S. European Command on Wednesday railed against Russian disinformation and election meddling, warning of future cyberattacks against the U.S. if the hostile power is left unchecked.

Retired Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove told the House Armed Services Committee that Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election was deeply troubling, though it's not surprising in light of their long interest in disinformation campaigns.

Now, he said it's up to Americans to acknowledge the threats and to develop effective and long-overdue strategies to combat those forms of Russian aggression.

"We need to move to a place where we are ready to combat hybrid warfare," Breedlove said during a hearing on threats and nonstate-influenced operations. "Hybrid warfare is a form of warfare the United States has yet to fully understand, nevermind prepare for. Simply condemning the election is not going to solve the problem and it's not going to prevent future Russian hybrid operations."

The comments come on the heels of heightened concerns that the White House isn't in agreement with the Pentagon when it comes to ending off future Russian cyberattacks and meddling.

President Donald Trump on

Tuesday sparked controversy once again when he called to congratulate Russian President Vladimir Putin following his reelection, a voting process reportedly riddled with fraud and other shadowy circumstances.

Trump's call to Putin drew a strong reaction from Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and a frequent critic of both presidents.

"An American president does not lead the Free World by congratulating dictators on winning sham elections," said McCain, who has been home while battling brain cancer. "President Trump insulted every Russian citizen who was denied the right to vote in a free and fair election."

Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., the ranking Democrat of the House Armed Services Committee, lauded McCain's comments, saying it was time to get the White House on the same page to fend off future Russian cyberattacks.

Many lawmakers in Congress agree challenging the Russians can be done by weaponizing the internet as they do, but Trump's administration remains a missing puzzle in the month said.

"I know that the Pentagon is trying, but this has to be a whole-of-government approach," he said. "It starts with the president. And the president has been unwilling to do this. ... we've got to get the White House to decide this is important and to engage."

Breedlove said Russian hybrid

warfare dates to the Soviet Union in the 1980s, when they used several disinformation tactics against the U.S. and others. By 2013, Russian Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the general staff of the country's armed forces, gave a speech detailing the strategy, Breedlove said.

Gerasimov said disinformation campaigns are "efforts of warfare" and could be more potent than traditional weapons of war, Breedlove told the House committee.

"Russia sees the West, and in particular a unified West, as an adversary," Breedlove said. "Waging a conventional war against the West would be unfavorable to Russia. As such, it has used hybrid warfare to break up Western unity."

In all the cases of Russian disinformation and election interference, the West has been slow to recognize it and even slower to react, he said.

That needs to come to an end, Breedlove said.

"We need to treat this with the gravity it deserves. We need to take a position, establish policy and then execute it," he said.

While Russian hybrid threat is larger than the election and larger than the United States. It is a threat to the liberal order ... and will continue to be until we develop an effective strategy and implement the necessary policies to combat it."

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Zuckerberg goes on media blitz to take pressure off Facebook

By BARBARA ORTUTAY,
DANICA KIRKA
AND GREGORY KATZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK — In the wake of a privacy scandal involving a Trump-connected data-mining firm, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg embarked on a rare media mini-blitz in an attempt to take some of the public and political pressure off the social network.

But it's far from clear whether he's won over U.S. and European authorities, much less the broader public, whose status updates provide Facebook with an endless stream of data it uses to sell targeted ads.

On Wednesday, the generally reclusive Zuckerberg sat for an interview on CNN and gave another to the publication Wired, addressing reports that Cambridge Analytica purloined the data of more than 50 million Facebook users in order to sway elections.

The Trump campaign paid the firm \$6 million during the 2016 election, although it has since dis-

tanced itself from Cambridge.

Zuckerberg apologized for a "major breach of trust," admitted mistakes and outlined steps to protect users following Cambridge's data grab.

"I am really sorry that happened," Zuckerberg said on CNN. Facebook has a "responsibility" to protect its users' data, he added, noting that if it fails, "we don't deserve to have the opportunity to serve people."

His mea culpa on cable television came a few hours after he acknowledged his company's mistakes in a Facebook post, but without saying he was sorry.

Zuckerberg and Facebook's No. 2 executive, Sheryl Sandberg, had been quiet since news broke Friday that Cambridge may have used data improperly obtained from roughly 50 million Facebook users to try to sway elections. Cambridge's clients included Donald Trump's general election campaign.

Facebook shares have dropped some 8 percent, losing about \$46 billion off the company's market

value, since the revelations were first published.

While several experts said Zuckerberg took an important step with the CNN interview, few were convinced that he put the Cambridge issue behind him. Zuckerberg's apology, for instance, seemed rushed and pro forma to Helio Fred Garcia, a crisis management professor at NYU and Columbia University.

"He didn't acknowledge the harm or potential harm to the affected users," Garcia said. "I doubt most people realized he was apologizing."

Instead, the Facebook chief pointed to steps the company already has taken, such as a 2014 move to restrict the access out-of-state apps had to user data. (That move came too late to stop Cambridge.) And he laid out a series of technical changes that will limit further the data such apps can collect, pledged to notify users when outsiders misuse their information and said Facebook will "audit" apps that exhibit troubling behavior.

WORLD



PETER DAVID JOSEK/AP

People work at the site of an explosion at a chemical plant in Kralupy nad Vltavou, Czech Republic, on Thursday.

6 dead in explosion at Czech chemical factory

Associated Press

PRAGUE — An explosion rocked a chemical factory Thursday in the Czech Republic, killing six people and injuring two others, officials said.

Unipetrol, a Czech oil processor and plastics producer, said the blast took place inside one of the storage tanks for fuels and additives in its refinery in the town of Kralupy nad Vltavou, 10 miles north of the capital, Prague.

It was not immediately clear what caused the blast.

A Kralupy town crisis manager, Lukas Hodik, said the explosion seemed to occur when workers were cleaning an empty tank.

Regional firefighters confirmed that six people were killed and the two injured were sent to the hospital. Spokesman Petr Svoboda said there was no danger of further explosions at the site.

No dangerous substances have leaked out, according to police spokeswoman Marketa Jonova.

Acting Prime Minister Andrej Babis expressed his condolences to the victims' relatives.

UK urges EU unity on Russia

BY JILL LAWLESS
AND DANICA KIRKA
Associated Press

BRUSSELS — British Prime Minister Theresa May urged European Union leaders on Thursday to unite and condemn Russia as Moscow slammed the U.K. as untrustworthy in its investigation of the poisoning of a former spy.

Amid a heated war of words between London and Moscow, Russia's ambassador to the U.K., Alexander Yakovenko, said his country "can't take British words for granted" and accused the U.K. of having a "bad record of violating international law and misleading the international community."

Britain says it is complying with the international chemical weapons watchdog over the March 4 attack on Sergei Skripal — a former Russian intelligence officer convicted of spying for the U.K. — and his daughter, Yulia.

Experts from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons have gone to Britain to take samples of the nerve agent that left the Skripals in critical condition since the attack in the English city of Salisbury.

May wants an EU summit in Brussels to make a strong statement against Russian Presi-

dent Vladimir Putin after the poisoning.

Britain blames Moscow for the attack with a military-grade nerve agent and has called Russia a growing threat to Western democracies. Russia has fiercely denied the accusations. Both nations have expelled 23 of each other's diplomats over the attack.

EU foreign ministers have expressed their "unqualified solidarity" with Britain, but May will try to swing the 27 other EU leaders behind a more strongly worded statement that explicitly condemns Russia.

Arriving Thursday at the summit in Brussels, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė offered her full backing to Britain and said she was weighing whether to expel Russian diplomats over the Salisbury attack as well. Former Soviet state Lithuania shares a border with Russia's Kaliningrad exclave.

EU Council President Donald Tusk is seen by the U.K. as supportive, saying earlier this week that Europe must "reinforce our preparedness for future attacks."

But British officials are irked that another EU chief, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, congratulated Putin on his victory in Sunday's presidential election in Russia.

Election monitors said the Russian vote did not take place on a level playing field since state media gave so much coverage to Putin.

Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, a former criminal lawyer, said he wanted to hear what May had to say.

"I have the principle that first I listen, and then I take a decision," he said. "We need to exchange, to listen to her."

The attack has sent relations between London and Moscow to Cold War-style lows.

On Wednesday, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said it was "emetic" — vomit-inducing — that Putin is rejoicing over hosting the World Cup soccer tournament this summer. Russia responded that Johnson was "poisoned with venom of malice and hate."

Johnson also said Russia's hosting of the June 15-July 15 tournament could be compared to the 1936 Olympics, which was used as propaganda exercise by Nazi Germany.

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the comparison an "utterly disgusting statement which is unworthy of a foreign minister of any country." He called Johnson's words "insulting and unacceptable."

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WORLD

Nigerian official: Most girls taken last month freed

dpa

NAIROBI, Kenya — A Nigerian minister said Wednesday that 104 of the 110 schoolgirls abducted last month by Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram in the northeastern town of Dapchi have been returned home.

Information and Culture Minister Alhaji Lai Mohammed did not confirm the whereabouts of the remaining six girls, but said those who were freed had been identified. In addition to the schoolgirls, another girl and a boy were released.

Mohammed denied reports that a ransom had been paid or that a prisoner swap deal was reached to secure their release.

The government had conducted back-channel negotiations with Boko Haram that resulted in a "nonviolent approach" to their release, Mohammed said in a statement. The girls were brought back by a group of militants in a convoy.

"An operational pause was observed in certain areas to ensure free passage and also that lives were not lost," the minister said.

Garba Shehu, an aide to President Muhammadu Buhari, told dpa that the 11- to 19-year-old girls had been returned to Yobe state by Boko Haram militants and that they were receiving medical attention.

The girls were then airlifted to the capital Abuja aboard a military transport plane.



HAMZA SULEIMAN/AP

Girls from the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi who were kidnapped and set free are photographed during a handover to officials Wednesday in Maiduguri, Nigeria.

A parent of one of the girls, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that five of the 110 girls abducted were not among those rescued and that they may be dead. That information could not be independently verified.

Bashtir Manzo, another parent whose 16-year-old daughter was among those freed, said the rescued girls were being rounded up "so that we can do a head count to know how many were returned."

The girls were taken from their school on Feb. 19 by a group of militants who had attacked the town of Dapchi in Yobe state.

Peruvian leader latest undone by corruption

By FRANKLIN BRICENO
AND JOSHUA GOODMAN
Associated Press

LIMA, Peru — He took office in 2016 as a political outsider boasting that his strong business credentials would buoy Peru's economy while sweeping away endemic corruption. But with his offer of resignation, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski joins a long list of recent Peruvian presidents undone by scandals that have destroyed voters' trust in their elected officials.

Kuczynski, 79, flanked by his Cabinet, announced his decision to resign Wednesday in a nationally televised address, accusing opponents led by the daughter of former strongman Alberto Fujimori of plotting his overthrow for months and making it impossible to govern.

Shortly afterward, he exited the back door of the baroque presidential palace built by Spanish conquerors and was driven off, all alone, in an SUV.

Congress was expected to vote Thursday to accept his resignation, or if not, to impeach him.

It was an ignominious end to a presidency that started with the highest of expectations.

When Kuczynski, a former Wall Street investor, was elected in 2016, he immediately was thrust to the helm of a conservative revival in South America. Voters had grown tired of once-dominant leftist governments marred by corruption.

But he was hobbled almost immediately out of the gate. His self-tailored party, named for his own PPK initials, won just 18 seats in the 130-member congress. And instead of courting supporters on the left who pushed him to victory by a razor-thin margin over opponent Keiko Fujimori, he tried in vain to form an alliance with

the former strongman's power-hungry, vindictive allies. Aides privately complained of stubbornness and political naivete.

Even on the economy, his strong suit, Kuczynski fell short, as growth has slowed and promised mining and infrastructure projects never got off the ground.

What most outraged voters, however, was his seeming disloyalty, something that has long dominated Peruvian politics and he had vowed to end.

For months, as three of his predecessors were probed and one even was jailed for taking bribes from Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht, Kuczynski steadfastly denied having any business or political ties with the company at the heart of Latin America's biggest graft scandal.

Then, Fujimori's party produced confidential bank documents from Odebrecht showing \$780,000 in decade-old payments to his consulting firm.

To save his skin, he cut the sort of closed-door deal that Peruvians have grown to abhor. A group of lawmakers led by Kenji Fujimori defied his sister's leadership of the Popular Force party to narrowly block Kuczynski's impeachment. Days later, Kuczynski pardoned the feuding siblings' father from a 25-year jail sentence for human rights abuses committed during his decade-long presidency.

Ultimately, that alliance spelled his downfall. Popular Force this week revealed secretly shot videos of Kenji Fujimori and other presidential allies allegedly trying to buy the support of an opposition lawmaker with promises of state contracts.

Kuczynski denied any bribery attempt, but the damage was done.



VISAR KHVETZIO/AP

Kosovo police officers wear gas masks Wednesday as lawmakers cover their faces after a tear gas canister disrupted a parliamentary session in Pristina, Kosovo.

Tear gas disrupts Kosovo Assembly

By AMANDA ERICKSON
The Washington Post

There's civil disobedience.

There's a temper tantrum.

And then there's what this opposition party did to try to delay a controversial vote.

On Wednesday morning, the Kosovo Assembly was voting on whether to accept a new border agreement with Montenegro. The deal — key to gaining Kosovo's visa-free travel through the European Union — would cost Kosovo about 30 square miles of land. (Kosovo is the only country in the Balkans where citizens still need visas to travel to the Schengen

zone, which includes most EU member states.)

The Self-Determination Movement has long opposed the measure, arguing that Kosovo is relinquishing too much territory. The party's leader, Albin Kurti, described the Wednesday vote as "treason."

It didn't look as if the majority of parliament agreed, though. So to halt the measure, Self-Determination Movement officials set off a couple of tear gas canisters right before voting started, forcing lawmakers to evacuate the chambers. Later, when the Assembly reconvened, the party officials did the same

thing. As Reuters reported, the protest caused "deputies to withdraw, choking and spluttering."

At least two members were injured, according to The Associated Press.

Police arrested a small group of opposition lawmakers. Eight were barred from the session, and seven others were taken to prison.

It took four tries to finally call the session to order. But after voting commenced, the measure passed 80-11. President Hashim Thaci must decree the new border before the deal takes effect, and he has signaled that he will do so.

'Bee acupuncture' kills Spanish woman

The Washington Post

A woman in Spain died after undergoing a supposedly routine "bee acupuncture" treatment and then suffering an allergic reaction that put her into a coma.

The alternative-medicine procedure is more or less what its name conjures up. Instead of a needle, an acupuncture practitioner injects bee venom into the body at certain points. In some instances, live bees are used to sting and inject venom into the person directly.

The case in Spain involved live bees, according to the Journal of Investigational Allergology and Clinical Immunology, a Spanish

medical journal. The patient, a 55-year-old woman, already had been going to such bee acupuncture sessions every four weeks over a two-year period to treat stiff muscles and stress, the journal stated.

The woman had no history of other illness, such as asthma or heart disease, or a history of being allergic to insect bites or bee stings before, according to her case study.

"She developed wheezing, dyspnea, and sudden loss of consciousness immediately after a live bee sting," the report stated. "An ambulance was called, although it took 30 minutes to arrive."

The woman was taken to a hospital but died "some weeks later."



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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

School bus driver let strangers on board

IN LEBANON — A central Indiana school bus driver was fired for allowing two strangers to board her bus and scold a student for making lewd gestures.

Lebanon Community School Corp. Superintendent Dr. Robert Taylor said the substitute driver was fired last week for violating safety protocols. The woman's name hasn't been released.

Taylor said nine middle school and high school students were aboard when two people in a Hummer motioned for the driver to pull over along Interstate 65.

Taylor said the woman did and then allowed the pair onto the bus to scold a student who made "inappropriate gestures" through its back window.

Bridge to be preserved as symbol of history

MD SILVER SPRING — Officials agreed to preserve part of a historic Maryland bridge that served as a lifeline to blacks during segregation.

Montgomery County officials said the Maryland Transit Administration agreed to save the steel girders from the Talbot Avenue bridge when it's torn down to make way for a light-rail line and recreation trail.

The Washington Post reported that residents of Lyttonsville, founded in 1853 by a free black laborer, have worked for years to preserve the bridge, which was closed last year after failing a safety inspection. The bridge enabled blacks to reach restaurants and stores that would serve them in areas where they were allowed to work but not live.

Walmart ousts 3 men carrying weapons

MS COLUMBUS — The states of Georgia and Mississippi have open-carry laws, meaning licensed gun owners can go around in public displaying their weapons. But businesses still have the right to prohibit weapons on their property.

That's what happened in a Mississippi Walmart recently after three Georgia men went shopping while openly carrying an M-4 assault rifle, a handgun and a machete.

The Commercial Dispatch reported that a Walmart employee called police and then managers asked the men to leave once officers arrived.

Columbus Police Chief Fred Shelton said they left without incident.

Tests show why a female lion sprouted a mane

OK OKLAHOMA CITY — Lab results have revealed the answer to a mystery at an Oklahoma zoo: just what caused a female lion to sprout a mane.

The Oklahoma City Zoo said in its March newsletter that testing at the University of Tennessee found the African lioness named Brutus had an elevated level of androstenedione, a hormone that

THE CENSUS

\$4.5K

The approximate worth of copper stolen from a former industrial business in Connecticut. Authorities said more than 2,100 feet of copper cable was cut from various areas inside the Wyre Wynd Corp. in Jewett City recently. Police said the recent break-in led to \$30,000 in damages at the building. Investigators said the suspects used a forklift to reach the wire cables located 25 feet off the floor.



ALAN CAMPBELL, THE ROCKY MOUNT (N.C.) TELEGRAM/AP

Getting ready to play ball

Rocky Mount Sports Complex employees J.R. Perry, left, and Vonqual Kirtz install home plate on one of the Little League fields at the complex this week in Rocky Mount, N.C. The bases on the diamond were also installed in preparation for the season.

can contribute to developing male features.

The zoo said the results likely mean the 18-year-old lioness has a benign tumor that's producing the hormones, but that her health is excellent.

7 children bitten when pit bull enters school

NC CHARLOTTE — Police said seven children were bitten and scratched by a pit bull that got inside a North Carolina elementary school.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg police told local media the dog entered the playground at Lansdowne Elementary School as children were playing. Staff members led the children into the school, but the dog managed to get inside.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control said the overstimulated dog jumped on some of the children before a teacher confined the 10-month-old animal.

The school located the owner through information on the dog's collar tag. Animal control officials told a news conference that they don't believe the dog was attacking the children, but it is under a 10-day quarantine.

2 historic ships found at construction site

VA ALEXANDRIA — The remains of two ships, potentially from the late 1700s or early 1800s, were found at a construction site in Old Town Alexandria.

City officials said the ships were found near where a previous ship was found in late 2015 at a different construction site.

The city said it will oversee an analysis of the ships before determining what to do with them.

Founded more than 250 years ago, Alexandria was once home to one of the busiest ports in the country.

3 people plead guilty in theft of lingerie

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Utah court records show three people pleaded guilty to charges related to the theft of more than \$500,000 in underwear and other merchandise from Victoria's Secret stores in Las Vegas.

Records show William Orlando Pinzon Galindo, 41, and Francisco Ugarte Garcia, 22, pleaded guilty to receiving stolen proper-

ty, while Omaira Reina-Martinez, 24, pleaded guilty to that charge and having a fake ID.

The Deseret News in Salt Lake City reported that the three were pulled over for speeding on a Utah highway in January. Investigators found a large amount of lingerie and other items in the car with price tags and theft prevention devices attached.

Police: Man stole car to warm up but got no heat

MA HINGHAM — Police in Massachusetts said a homeless man stole an idling car to warm up but couldn't figure out how to turn on the heat.

Hingham police told The Patriot Ledger that John Hastings, 59, was hospitalized after his arrest for prolonged exposure to the cold. He was then jailed on charges including larceny of a motor vehicle.

Investigators said the car was taken from the parking lot of a restaurant. An employee who was about to leave work had left the car idling to warm it up.

Hastings was arrested after he was seen driving the vehicle into Weymouth.

Police said the car's air conditioning was running.

Police say woman left child alone to buy pot

FL DAVENPORT — Authorities said a Florida elementary school teacher left a 4-year-old child alone while she went to buy marijuana.

A Polk County Sheriff's Office news release said Marsha Dolce, 26, was arrested and charged with child neglect and marijuana possession.

Deputies responded to a Davenport apartment complex and found a 4-year-old child crying alone. Dolce, who teaches fourth grade at Laurel Elementary in Poinciana, eventually returned home and told deputies she had left to help a friend with car troubles.

Deputies reported finding marijuana in Dolce's home, and text messages on her phone indicated that she had gone to nearby Winter Haven hours earlier to buy the drug.

Child welfare officials removed the child from Dolce's home.

From wire reports

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STARS AND STRIPES®

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Toy company CEO looks to salvage Toys R Us

By ANNE D'INNOCENZO

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Toy company executive Isaac Larian and other investors have pledged a total of \$200 million and hope to raise four times that amount in crowdfunding in a bid to save potentially more than half of the 735 Toys R Us stores that will go dark in bankruptcy proceedings.

The unsolicited bid faces a number of hurdles like finding other deep-pocketed investors, as well as getting a bankruptcy judge to approve such an unusual plan. It is the first known plan to keep the Toys R Us brand alive.

The long-shot bid would be a huge benefit to Larian. Nearly 1 in every 5 sales made by Bratz doll-maker MGA Entertainment, where Larian is CEO, is rung up at a Toys R Us store.

Larian says he and the other investors, which he declined to name, believe that saving part of Toys R Us will be good for the toy industry, customers and workers.

The announcement last week that Toys R Us would be lost generated an enormous outpouring of nostalgia. #SaveToysRUs became a trend on social media.

The group trying to save a remnant of the toy chain is hoping that



CHRISTINE COTTER/AP

MGA CEO Isaac Larian, left, is launching a campaign to salvage some of Toys R Us' U.S. business being liquidated in bankruptcy.

with Toys R Us on the brink, it can reach its goal of raising \$1 billion in funding. The website save-toys-r-us.com directs consumers to a GoFundMe campaign to do that.

Toys R Us sought court approval last week to liquidate its remaining U.S. stores, threatening the jobs of some 30,000 employees and spelling the end for a chain known to generations of children and parents for its sprawling stores, sing-along jingle and Geoffrey the giraffe mascot.

The store has an iconic place in American culture, said Larian. "We can't just sit back and just let

it disappear."

Larian, a billionaire, is using his own money for the bid.

How could Larian save a store that has labored to remain relevant in the age of Amazon.com? For one thing, Larian would be free of the \$5 billion in debt that hampered the current owner of Toys R Us. The other reason is self-preservation.

The toy industry needs a national presence like Toys R Us, where designers can get real world reaction to new toys that children pull from shelves.

The demise of Toys R Us will

have a "devastating effect" on the toy industry, said Larian, who believes 130,000 U.S. jobs could be lost when layoffs at suppliers and logistic operations are included.

Toys R Us liquidation could mean layoffs at an MGA plant in Ohio that makes the Little Tikes toy vehicles. That brand accounts for 25 percent of MGA sales.

Trouble at Toys R Us has already shaken big toy makers like Mattel and Hasbro. MGA, based in Van Nuys, Calif., is the world's largest privately held toy company. The planned liquidation would have a bigger impact on smaller toy makers that rely more on Toys R Us for sales.

If as many as 400 stores can be saved, it is Larian's hope that a third of the 130,000 jobs he sees as lost could be rescued.

The shuttering of Toys R Us stores in coming months would be the final chapter of a company undercut by shifting currents that range from online shopping to mobile games.

When it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last fall, Toys R Us pledged to stay open.

But in January, after what CEO David Brandon called a "devastating" holiday shopping season, 182 stores were marked for closure. Last week, a total liquidation

was announced.

The company is trying to bundle its Canadian business with about 200 U.S. stores and find a buyer. Larian has personally aligned with another investor in a separate bid for those operations.

Toys R Us will likely liquidate its businesses in Australia, France, Poland, Portugal and Spain. It's already shuttering its business in the United Kingdom. That would leave it with the stores in Canada, as well as in central Europe and Asia. It operates more than 700 stores outside the United States.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (March 23)	\$1.2641
Dollar buys (March 23)	69.7911
British pound (March 23)	\$1.45
Japanese yen (March 23)	104.00
South Korean won (March 23)	1,041.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.4123
Canada (dollar)	1.2917
China (Yuan)	6.3345
Denmark (Krone)	6.0445
Egypt (Pound)	17.6105
Euro	\$1.2322/0.8115
Hong Kong (dollar)	1.7847
Hungary (Forint)	253.16
Israel (Shekel)	3.4865
Japan (Yen)	105.44
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2998
Norway (Krone)	7.7322
Philippines (Peso)	52.38
Poland (Zloty)	3.43
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7493
Singapore (dollar)	1.3157
South Korea (Won)	1,078.81
Switzerland (Franc)	0.9475
Thailand (Baht)	31.27
Turkey (Lira)	9.3314

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.44
3-month bill	1.71
30-year bond	3.04

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.887	\$3.170	\$3.403	\$3.261
Change in price	+\$3.8 cents	+\$3.8 cents	+\$3.6 cents	-0.4 cents
Netherlands	--	\$3.426	\$3.574	\$3.644
Change in price	--	-4.7 cents	-4.3 cents	-1.9 cents
U.K.	--	\$3.115	\$3.348	\$3.206
Change in price	--	+\$3.8 cents	+\$3.6 cents	-0.4 cents
Azores	--	--	\$3.346	--
Change in price	--	--	+\$3.36 cents	--
Belgium	--	\$2.876	\$3.104	\$3.141
Change in price	--	No change	No change	No change
Turkey	--	--	\$3.204	\$3.082*
Change in price	--	--	+\$3.6 cents	-0.4 cents
Italy	\$4.050	--	--	\$4.088
Change in price	No change	--	--	No change

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	--	\$3.149	--	\$3.009
Change in price	--	+4.0 cents	--	No change
Okhawa	\$2.629	--	--	\$3.009
Change in price	+4.0 cents	--	--	No change
South Korea	\$2.669	\$2.949	\$3.179	\$3.039
Change in price	+4.0 cents	+4.0 cents	+3.0 cents	-1.0 cents
Guam	\$2.659**	\$2.949	\$3.179	--
Change in price	+3.0 cents	No change	+4.0 cents	--

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of March 24-30

MARKET WATCH

March 21, 2018	
Dow Jones	-44.96
Industrials	24,682.31
Nasdaq composite	-19.02
Poor's 500	7,345.29
Standard & Poor's 500	-5.01
Russell 2000	2,711.93
	1,579.30

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

WEEKEND



Big Boi continues expansion to TV, film
Page 39



‘Idol’ to indie

In 2016, country singer Scotty McCreery lost his record deal. He kept the faith and hammered out an arrangement to buy back his songs. One of them became his first No. 1.

Page 36

WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS



Amazon/TNS

Now when you wake Alexa and ask a question or give a command, she will say "OK" and then listen for a few seconds for follow-up tasks.

Alexa now able to listen for multiple commands

By JIM ROSSMAN
The Dallas Morning News

I'm always happy when Amazon introduces new features for Alexa.

This week, Amazon introduced an Amazon Echo feature that will change how users interact with Alexa every day.

Owning an Echo means interacting with Alexa by saying her name and then asking a question or issuing a command.

"Alexa, what's the temperature?"

"Alexa, what's the score of the Dallas Stars game?"

"You have to say the wake word without every interaction with the Echo."

By default, the wake word is Alexa. If, by chance, you have a person named Alexa in your household, you'll want to change the wake word to one of the other choices (Echo, Amazon, or Computer).

The change this week involves a feature called Follow-Up Mode.

When you wake Alexa and ask a question or give a command, she will say "OK" and then keep listening for a few seconds for follow-up commands, which do not require the wake word.

"Alexa, add toothpaste to my shopping list." "OK."
"Add peanut butter." "OK."
"Add paper towels." "OK."

All three items will instantly pop up on your shopping list. In fact, you can keep adding as many commands as you like, as long as you don't hesitate for more than a few seconds between commands.

When you are finished, simply say thank you, and Alexa will say, "You're welcome" or "No worries."

You'll need to enable Follow-Up Mode on each Echo device in your house. Go to the Alexa app on your phone and choose Settings from the menu in the upper left corner of the home screen.

Choose your Echo and then scroll down to Follow-Up Mode and touch the switch to enable it. You'll need to enable each Echo in your house.

There is one other way to issue multiple commands on the Echo. A feature called Routines was introduced recently. There is a difference between a Routine and issuing multiple commands.

Routines are groupings of commands that can be triggered at a specific time or with a specific word or phrase.

For instance, I have a routine that turns off all the lights in our bedroom when I say, "Alexa, good night."

Routines are limited to smart home commands and reading news, weather and traffic reports.

You'll find Routines in the settings of the Alexa app.

GADGET WATCH

Picture yourself using great trade show items

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

The 2018 WPPI trade show, for veteran or rookie wedding and portrait photographers, was held recently in Las Vegas. As usual, the trade show portion of the event hosted companies introducing new innovative products to help photographers to do their job.

Hahnemuehle showed customers their natural white cotton printing canvas Cezanne 430gsm, which features a finely woven, elegant surface structure. The canvas is ideal for stretch frames and has a first-class side color gamut with deep, high blacks.

Decades ago, Hahnemuehle invented fine-art inkjet papers for digital prints, and their tradition of optimum quality exists to this day.

Once you use their products, you'll see that their motto of producing photo papers based on user demands and new market segments is a tremendous benefit.

Online: hahnemuehle.com; available in a variety of roll sizes; 24-16.4 inches; \$41.90

LumiQuest showed off the LumiQuest Last-and, which they refer to as a Swiss Army Knife item, since every photographer will want one.

The company calls it the only all-in-one light stand, tripod and monopod with aluminum construction featuring the exclusive LumiQuest Quick-Connect, which accepts cameras, flash and LED lights.

The patent pending octagonal self-aligning base also features a built-in umbrella release. The kit includes a convertible umbrella with case/ballast holder. The Lastand has a seven-foot maximum height, which collapses to 7 inches for ultra-compact at 3.2 pounds. A handheld grip for mobility is included.

Online: lumiquest.com; \$189.95

Skylum, Luminar 2018 is new software for



Mac and Windows users, designed as a universal all-in-one photo app, offering everything a photographer needs for photo editing.

It includes intelligent filters and more than 100 built-in presets. Some advanced features including tools for layers, masking and blending, lens correction and transform tools, which any photo editing job most certainly requires.

The software has a digital asset management module for organizing photos and raw image processing. The Skylum site has a free 14-day trial, or you can purchase a full license for \$69. Online: skylum.com

nPhoto has a new sleek and stylish Folio Boxe, which is perfect for presenting your personal photos or images to a client. They are handcrafted with the choice of either high-quality textiles or leatherette with a variety of color options. There are more than 60 printing options, including Laser Etching, UV Design and Embossed text and fonts.

Choices for printing images include printing on Fujicolor Crystal Archive Digital Silk Paper and state-of-the-art image mats designed to allow your artwork to last a lifetime. Or photographers can have their images mounted on durable foam prints.

Sizes vary to safely fit 5, 10, 15 or 20 images per box. The boxes range in sizes of 5-by-7 inches for 4-by-6-inch prints up to a 12-by-16-inch box for 8.5-by-11-inch prints.

Online: nphoto.com

FrameALIVE is a new app that is really cool. After hearing about it at the show, I went to the FrameALIVE site, which makes you an offer you can't refuse; use the free App for three free FrameALIVEs.

The app combines image recognition with videos to produce pictures that "come to life with a click." This creates masterpieces simply by selecting a still photo and aligning it with a video in the FrameALIVE dashboard, which brings your pictures to life.

Videos can be added to photo albums, design moving portraits, make printed books with YouTube videos, and so much more.

Online: framealive.com; additional FrameALIVEs are \$1.99 each, 30 for \$50 for 120 for \$190

The sleek and stylish Folio Boxe is hand-crafted with the choice of either high-quality textiles or leatherette with a variety of color options.

nPHOTO/TNS

ON THE COVER: Deep-voiced country musician Scotty McCreery is making a comeback after signing with an independent label.

Courtesy of EB Media PR

ITUNES MUSIC

The top 10 songs on iTunes for the week ending March 15:

1. "God's Plan," Drake
2. "Zombie," Bad Wolves
3. "The Middle," Zedd, Maren Morris & Grey
4. "Meant to Be" (feat. Florida Georgia Line), Bebe Rexha
5. "Whatever It Takes," Imagine Dragons
6. "Perfect," Ed Sheeran
7. "You Make It Easy," Jason Aldean
8. "Never Be the Same," Camila Cabello
9. "DEVIL," Shinedown
10. "Pray For Me," The Weeknd & Kendrick Lamar

— Compiled by AP

SPOTIFY MUSIC

The top 10 songs on Spotify for the week ending March 20:

1. "God's Plan," Drake
2. "Psycho" (feat. Ty Dolla Sign), Post Malone
3. "SAD!" XXXTENTACION
4. "FRIENDS," Marshmello
5. "All the Stars" (with SZA), Kendrick Lamar
6. "Look Alive" (feat. Drake), BlacBoy JB
7. "IDGAF," Dua Lipa
8. "The Middle," Zedd, Maren Morris & Grey
9. "X," Nicky Jam
10. "Mine," Bazzi

— Compiled by Stars and Stripes

ITUNES MOVIES

The top 10 movies on iTunes for the week ending March 18:

1. "Star Wars: The Last Jedi"
2. "I, Tonya"
3. "Justice League"
4. "The Shape of Water"
5. "Thor: Ragnarok"
6. "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle"
7. "Coco"
8. "Ferdinand"
9. "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"
10. "The Dark Tower"

— Compiled by AP

ITUNES BOOKS

The top 10 books on iTunes for the week ending March 18:

1. "Russian Roulette," David Corn & Michael Isakoff
2. "The Great Alone," Kristin Hannah
3. "The Wife Between Us," Greer Hendricks & Sarah Pekkanen
4. "Little Fires Everywhere," Celeste Ng
5. "The Escape Artist," Brad Meltzer
6. "The Woman in the Window," A.J. Finn
7. "A Wrinkle in Time," Madeleine L'Engle
8. "Red Sparrow," Jason Matthews
9. "A Brief History of Time," Stephen Hawking
10. "The Man from St. Petersburg," Ken Follet

— Compiled by AP

ITUNES APPS

The top paid iPhone apps for the week ending March 18:

1. Heads Up!
2. Minecraft
3. Pocket Build
4. Plague Inc.
5. Fcuture
6. Bloons TD 5
7. iSchedule
8. Geometry Dash
9. NBA 2K18
10. My Talking Pet

— Compiled by AP

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

1 'Station 19' fires up 'Grey's Anatomy' spinoff



Jason George, right, stars as surgeon-turned-firefighter Ben Warren in "Station 19." At left is Barrett Doss.

ABC

Out with the old TV and in with the old TV. It's March, and despite so much profound change in the making and distributing of televised content, this is still the month when networks begin to quietly unload whatever's left of the current season.

"Station 19," launching on AFN-Spectrum, is the Seattle firehouse that "Grey's Anatomy's" Ben Warren (Jason George) joined as a rookie earlier this season, and now it's got its own spinoff series (and so does Ben).

This firehouse is run by Capt. Pruitt (Miguel Sandoval), whose daughter, Andy Herrera (Jaina Lee Ortiz), serves as a tough-as-nails firefighter under him. When ABC first laid the groundwork for this spinoff in the 13th season finale — a typically wild one, with a big explosion at Grey Sloan Hospital and lots of flames — Warren confided, "I'm not a big fan of fire. It's my worst nightmare, actually." Then, when Andy — introduced on "Grey's" a few weeks ago — asked why the job switch, he explained, "I got into a lot of trouble" by operating on someone with a clipboard (seriously), and "now I get to do whatever it takes to save a life, and that's only a good thing."

Hey, tell that to the next guy you cut open with a clipboard, Ben.

— Verne Gay/Newsday

• 'Station 19' premieres Friday on AFN-Spectrum.

2

Challenging 'Amid Evil' a blast from the past

"Amid Evil" will remind gamers how difficult first-person shooter titles used to be. Enemies won't cut players any slack, but there's a wide variety of fantasy weapons to aid in the difficult goal of staying alive. The low-res graphics and maniacal sounds are further reminiscent of games from the '90s. But as long as you don't mind exploration that takes effort, there's nothing wrong with a little nostalgia.

• 'Amid Evil' review on Page 26.

3

'Jumanji' reboot done right

Generally, moviegoers hope a popcorn flick will deliver a decent couple of hours of entertainment. Once in a while, a movie does more. "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle," one of last year's biggest surprises, starred Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black and Kevin Hart in a body-switching comedy/action adventure that rebooted the original from 1995 and got just about everything right. It's now on DVD for repeat-viewing pleasure.

• More new DVD releases on Page 39.



4

Author shares 'Bachelor'-inspired tips

Fans of "The Bachelor" have many different reasons to watch. Los Angeles Times reporter Amy Kaufman recently wrote a book, "Bachelor Nation," that gives some insight into this particular guilty pleasure. Kaufman has interviewed producers and contestants of the show, and confesses that she loves to watch it herself. Her conclusion: Dating on the show is mostly a hot mess, but there are still lessons to learn.

• More about the book on Page 38.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

Keeping the faith

By RYAN FAUGHNDER
Los Angeles Times

Last month, actor Dennis Quaid joined religious rock group MercyMe at a Dallas concert to sing — and promote his new movie. The band has toured for much of the past year in support of the new film “I Can Only Imagine,” which tells the story of how lead singer Bart Millard wrote the bestselling Christian single ever after the death of his father.

For a biblically-minded movie to succeed in theaters, it used to be enough to screen the film for pastors months ahead of time and create study guides for campus youth groups.

As the campaign for the new Christian music biopic illustrates, that’s no longer the case. Studios now have to go to greater lengths to attract devout audiences in an increasingly challenged faith-based film business, as the market for Christian movies becomes more crowded.

“Because there have been so many movies made for this audience, they have become much more discerning,” said Howard Cohen, co-founder of Roadside Attractions, the distributor of “I Can Only Imagine.” “And they will choose the ones that not only have a strong, Christian message but are bigger-feeling, more studio-type films.”

Just a few years ago, the faith-based genre produced multiple surprise hits as studios ramped up investment in religious-themed movies, resulting in successes such as “Heaven Is for Real” and “God’s Not Dead.” The rate of faith-based films released in theaters annually has doubled since 2012 to about 12 a year.

But the genre is now in a surprising slump. The last bona fide commercial hit designed for religious audiences was Lionsgate’s “The Shack,” about a man’s encounters with personifications of God, which collected \$97 million worldwide.

Movies explicitly about people practicing or defending their beliefs

— once a reliably bankable subgenre, despite poor reviews — have delivered diminishing returns.

“God’s Not Dead 2” grossed \$20 million in the U.S. and Canada in 2016, a third of the domestic box office of its predecessor. (Another sequel comes out this month.) Titles such as “Same Kind of Different as Me” and “A Question of Faith” faltered at the box office last year.

“There’s been significantly more films trying to compete for oxygen, and a lot of them have failed financially,” said Rich Peluso, head of Sony Pictures’ faith-based label Affirm Films.

That’s a problem for a movie industry that has been eager to get churchgoers from the pews to the theaters ever since Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ” grossed \$370 million domestically and set the standard for getting churches to buy tickets in bulk.

Christians are an appealing market for expand the cinema audience as digital competition causes long-term declines in theatrical attendance. The movie business is routinely crit-

No longer a novelty, Christian film business is looking for new ways to attract audiences

icized for overlooking the values of religious Americans, and faith-based filmmaking was seen as a way to rebut that narrative and attract an audience that usually doesn’t go to the movies.

Facing a wearied audience, some filmmakers are trying to adapt by expanding into more subgenres, including romances, sports dramas, comedies and documentaries.

“We’re developing beyond just the genre of sermon-on-film,” said Bill Reeves, head of Tennessee-based WTA Group, a marketing firm that specializes in faith-based media. “We’re trying to answer the question of ‘What else is out there?’”

Others are putting their faith in Bible-based stories with big-name stars. This weekend, Affirm Films releases “Paul, Apostle of Christ,” which blends scripture and fiction to tell the story of the apostle’s last days. The new movie features actor Jim Caviezel in his first biblical role since he played Jesus in “The Passion of the Christ.”

Affirm is hoping Caviezel’s star power with the faith audience will

make a difference at the multiplex. To promote the film, the actor spoke at an event at Liberty University in

Lynchburg, Va., that was simulcast to 1,200 churches with clips of the movie. “We definitely are connecting closer to the heart of pastors and church leaders than we have on pretty much any other film we’ve done,” Affirm’s Peluso said.

A less traditional pick for the faith-based audience is Universal Pictures’ “Unbroken: Path to Redemption,” a follow-up to the 2014 film about Olympic runner and World War II prisoner of war Louis Zamperini, set to debut in October.

The new “Unbroken” — about Zamperini’s life after the war, including his struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol abuse and conversion to Christianity — is a direct response to a more demanding faith-based audience, producer Matt Baer said.

The first “Unbroken,” released by Universal Pictures and directed by Angelina Jolie, grossed \$114 million in the U.S. and Canada. Yet the film drew criticism from religious audiences because it did not include the veteran’s religious awakening inspired by evangelist Billy Graham. The late preacher is played by his grandson Will Graham in the new film.

“‘Unbroken: Path to Redemption’ is the ideal example of where the faith-based movie is headed,” Baer said. “It’s a true story that utilizes faith in a natural way. It’s not shoehorned in.”

It’s unclear whether the latest crop of Christian films will succeed.

“I Can Only Imagine,” a \$7 million production shot in 25 days in Oklahoma City, is expected to gross a modest \$4 million in its opening weekend, according to people who have read pre-release audience surveys.

Jon Erwin, who directed the movie with his brother, Andrew, knew it was a risky bet. He said a film executive once dismissed the idea of a Christian music biopic, telling him the audience for such a movie was about 18,000 people.

“I hope we prove him wrong,” Erwin said. “I have faith that there’s an audience for this film and other films like it.”



David A.R. White stars in “God’s Not Dead: A Light in Darkness.”

Pure Flix Entertainment

WEEKEND: MOVIES



Sony Pictures

Luke (Jim Caviezel, left) struggles to spread the Gospel as Paul (James Faulkner) is held captive during the reign of Roman emperor Nero in "Paul, Apostle of Christ."

'Paul, Apostle of Christ'

Well-timed biblical drama offers solace

By ANN HORNADAY
The Washington Post

"Paul, Apostle of Christ" comes from Sony Pictures Entertainment's Affirm label, an offshoot that has produced such Christian-themed dramas as "Heaven Is for Real," "Soul Surfer" and "Risen." Less interested in blunt proselytizing than more open-ended explorations of faith and its challenges, Affirm films have gratifyingly avoided the kind of pietistic Sunday-school pageantry that characterizes so many motion pictures of the genre.

Written and directed by Andrew Hyatt, "Paul, Apostle of Christ" is no exception. A portrait of the titular Christian convert and leader of the early church as he faces imprisonment and martyrdom at the hands of Roman oppressors, this absorbing drama benefits from lush production values (it was filmed in Malta) and first-rate performances from a cast of seasoned actors.

Inspired by the New Testament book Acts of the Apostles, the story focuses on Luke (Jim Caviezel), a Greek physician and colleague of Paul's in setting up early Christian communities, as he visits his incarcerated friend, desperately recording his final words of wisdom while Nero's forces torture and murder their brothers and sisters outside the prison gates.

Hyatt includes flashbacks of Paul's famous conversion, from tormentor of Christians to a believer, while on the road to Damascus. Those sequences are filmed in a milky, filtered light and slow-motion haze that threatens to drench

"Paul" in Hallmark-card sentimentality. But when the action returns to Rome, the movie becomes far tougher and more intriguing.

Caviezel is convincing as a man of both reason and belief. James Faulkner brings sonorous authority and deep sensitivity to Paul, whose insistence on following Christ's most essential commandments — to love God, and to love one's neighbor as oneself — is both gentle and uncompromisingly courageous.

In a polyplot production that easily accommodates French, British and Irish accents, Olivier Martinez plays Paul's captor, a man whose belief in his own Roman gods is being rattled by the fatal illness of his daughter. But next to Faulkner's quietly affecting portrayal, the most compelling passages of the film take place in Rome's embattled Christian quarter, where a frightened and rapidly fraying community is wondering whether to stay and fight or escape to rebuild. As Aquila and Priscilla, the nominal leaders of the beleaguered insurgents, John Lynch and Joanne Whalley deliver nuanced, fully inhabited performances.

"Paul, Apostle of Christ" is clearly well timed with Lenten reflections on sacrifice, service, suffering and responsibility. But it offers an equally relevant — and inspiring — portrayal of principled steadfastness and spiritual integrity in the face of a petty, corrupt and tyrannical leader. In that sense, and appropriately enough, "Paul, Apostle of Christ" offers both solace and a bracing, even revolutionary, challenge.

"Paul, Apostle of Christ" is rated PG-13 for some violence and disturbing images. Running time: 107 minutes.



LEGENDARY PICTURES-UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

A new generation of the gigantic, human-piloted fighting machines must vanquish monstrous beasts to save humanity in "Pacific Rim Uprising," starring John Boyega, left, and Scott Eastwood.

High-action 'Pacific Rim Uprising' manages to outpace its predecessor

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

The Pacific Rim action franchise has a relatively simple premise — giant robots and alien monsters clobber each other to smithereens — but surprisingly, it's driven by a supremely radical embrace of collectivism, teamwork and empathy. This isn't necessarily a surprise, because it comes from the big, beating heart of Guillermo del Toro, who has always seen opportunities to focus on love and connection in moments of horror. Del Toro directed the first "Pacific Rim," and produced its sequel, "Pacific Rim Uprising," which he has left in the hands of director and co-writer Stephen S. DeKnight, who brings a singularly frenetic energy to his feature directorial debut that manages to outpace the first film.

John Boyega stars as Jake Pentecost, the son of the legendary Stacker Pentecost (played by Idris Elba in the first film), who sacrificed himself in the great war against the kaiju. If you're unfamiliar with the "Pacific Rim" lore, all you need to know is giant alien monsters came out of the sea to destroy everything on Earth, and humans hit back with enormous fighting robots called Jaegers. Piloted in pairs, the Jaeger pilots have to sync up their brains, or "drift," via a "neural handshake" that allows them to be inside each other's brains, swimming around in their memories, emotions and thoughts. Empathetic connection is required to be a good robot fighter pilot.

A decade after the first war with the kaiju, the ocean breaches are sealed, and all seems at peace — for now. Jake, a former Ranger pilot who flamed out and now spends his time partying and bartering on the black market, is pressed to re-enlist as a get-out-of-jail-free card, along with a scrappy young girl, Amara (Cailee Spaeny), who's been cobbling her own home-made Jaeger together.

Like a kaiju, DeKnight has a relentless, propulsive and often bonkers style. "Pacific Rim Uprising" moves at a breakneck clip, so just try

to keep up. You may catch snippets about "kaiju blood," "precursors," "toxic gas" and the names of all the various Jaegers like "Gypsy Avenger," "November Ajax," "Saber Athena," "Bracer Phoenix" and the like. The script by DeKnight, Emily Carmichael, Kira Snyder and T.S. Nowlin strikes a tone that is at once self-aware and open-hearted, and it's also simply a tornado of dialogue. Boyega doesn't let a scene go by without a sidebar, quip or joke.

Spaeny shines in her first film role, with casting director Sarah Halley Finn has stacked the cast with a roster of interesting, magnetic newcomers. Charlie Day and Burn Gorman do truly loopy character work as a pair of mad scientists. However, "Pacific Rim Uprising" is propelled by the powerful gravitational pull of John Boyega's charisma. As Jake, there are dashes of the street-smart Moses from "Attack the Block," and comparisons to the heroic Finn from "Star Wars," but Boyega feels unleashed, having fun with his natural humor and charm, delivering one-liners as well as he does motivational speeches.

In terms of monsters and robots, "Pacific Rim Uprising" ups the ante — how about rogue Jaegers? Drone Jaegers? Kaiju Jaegers? These pilots will fight them all. But despite all these advancements, the clashes are rather generic and forgettable, and a couple of these characters are too — Nate (Scott Eastwood) and Jules (Adria Arjona) are there only to offer Jake some friction.

But when Jake and Amara get their moment to try to save the world, it's profoundly affecting, even if the context of an over-the-top monster movie is also profoundly outlandish and silly. We know them, we care about them, and they want to save the world. That personal element is why, underneath all that crashing chaos and cacophony, you can find something rather soft and beautiful, if you care to look.

"Pacific Rim Uprising" is rated PG-13 for sequences of sci-fi violence and action, and some language. Running time: 111 minutes.



'Sherlock Gnomes'

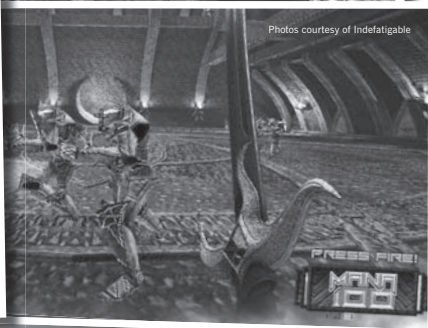
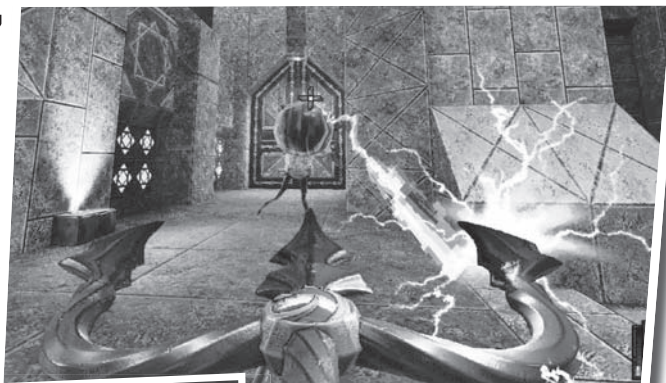
A review of "Sherlock Gnomes" was not available at press time. Johnny Depp, Emily Blunt and James McAvoy lend their voices to the computer-animated comedy, rated PG for some rude and suggestive humor. Running time: 86 minutes.

Paramount Pictures

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

FPS 'Amid Evil'

a short, gory walk down memory lane



Photos courtesy of Indefatigable

By MICHAEL S. DARNELL
Stars and Stripes

Diving into "Amid Evil," a throwback first-person shooter by Indefatigable, reminded me of a truth that I had long forgotten. First-person shooters used to be challenging, and I am absolutely rubbish at them.

Sure, more modern games with their generous hitboxes and slow pace of play fooled me into thinking that I had improved somewhere between "Quake III Arena" and "Halo 5," but the fact is, I hadn't.

I was quickly reminded of this when I loaded up "Amid Evil" for the first time and was promptly obliterated in less time than it took to say "why didn't I respawn?"

That's the exact feeling that Indefatigable was going for.

Everything in the still-in-early-access "Amid Evil" heralds its creators' love for the early-'90s FPS. The low-poly graphics, the visual aesthetic ripped from a death metal album cover, the sound design that includes bloodcurdling screams and maniacal laughter. Every aspect of "Amid Evil" is a love letter to a bygone era — an homage to a more uncivilized time, if you will.

Chief among those elements is the blistering speed of play. If you haven't played an older FPS in some

time, the biggest thing that sticks out is how quickly everything happens. Players and enemies alike moved much faster than in the vast number of modern shooters. It's not a bad thing that shooters have slowed their pace, but the difference in speed of characters and enemies in something like "Doom II" and the modern "Wolfenstein" is night and day.

"Amid Evil" matches those older titles in pace of play. That speed influences everything — character movement, enemy attacks and level design. In fact, you're graded on completion time at the end of each level. The game wants you to move quickly, which is in stark contrast to the more methodical shooters of today.

The difficulty level of "Amid Evil" isn't too extreme, but it takes some getting used to. Once again ripping pages from FPS history books, the game doesn't give you regenerating health, shields or an abundance of health pickups. Health is a scarce commodity, and even low-level enemies can kill you in a few hits.

To survive, you're going to have to be light on your feet, keep your head on a swivel and search every nook and cranny for power-ups. Health globes and ammo pickups are scattered across the intricately designed, multi-level maps, with secrets galore in each.

Outside of a handful of boss battles, the mission of each level is basically the same. Find weapons, kill enemies. Sometimes you have to first find keys to open up doors so that you can kill even more enemies. This game is never going to be mistaken for an intellectual exercise.

The enemies are all demonic entities with horns and globular clusters of eyeballs and ichor. More than a couple feel like characters left on the "Doom" cutting-room floor. That's not a bad thing. Besides 2016's "Doom," most shooters have gone for more cartoony or ultra-realistic looks. It's nice to play something a bit different — even if once upon a time the evil aesthetic was the tired trope of its day.

Of course, the monsters are very bad and want to murder you, so you're going to have to kill them harder. To that end, "Amid Evil" features a bevy of fantasy weapons for you to try out. There is a sword that fires off shotgun-like blasts, a mace that fires spikes that impale your enemies against the wall (nice nod to "Painkiller" there) and a ton of others to discover.

They are scattered across the level, and once collected remain in your inventory — unless you die. Then you can reload your game from an auto or manual save point — like a coward — or you can reload the level and try

again. The weapons at that point are stripped from your personage and you have to rearm yourself on each level.

This unique system seems to be aimed at satisfying the hardcore FPS fans — who want the game to be as back-breakingly difficult as possible — and other gamers who would get annoyed at having to start levels over again.

Indefatigable really worked hard to make "Amid Evil" accessible without stripping it of what makes it unique — that it is a challenging game that makes no apologies for its love of old-school FPS games. If you enjoyed games like "Hexen" or "Doom," this game was basically made for you. Other gamers, I think, can still get a lot of enjoyment out of this — especially considering the \$20 price tag.

"Amid Evil" is still in early access, but for the life of me I can't see what else they'd need to add. The game is admittedly on the short side, if your style is to just play through each level and call it good. Those players can get through it in a solid weekend of play. I personally won't consider my time with "Amid Evil" done until I beat the par times in each level.

Which, considering my rusty hand-eye coordination, is going to take some time.

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Many more staff-written game reviews at stripes.com/games

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

DIG INTO HISTORY

Saarland Mining Museum takes visitors through the German state's coal production past

By MICHAEL B. KELLER
Stars and Stripes

In June 2012, 10 train cars brought out 1,000 tons of coal from the last active mine in Saarland. It was not only the mine's last run, but also the end of a 250-year tradition of coal mining in the western German state.

Coal production was vitally important to Saarland's economic development. However, health issues, cheaper imported coal and environmental concerns eventually led to the industry's local decline.

Visitors can still learn about the history of the state's coal production at the Saarland Mining Museum in Bexbach.

The museum, originally built in 1934, is a 120-foot-tall tower about 25 miles west of Kaiserslautern that houses fossils, tools, artifacts and artwork. It reviews both ancient mining history and the more recent daily lives of miners who worked in the tunnels.

There are five sections of exhibits in the museum's seven stories and a 600-foot-long underground gallery that showcases additional tools and equipment, while conveying



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL B. KELLER/Stars and Stripes

Clockwise from top: The first stretch of the underground gallery in the Saarland Mining Museum in Bexbach, Germany, requires visitors to crouch under ceiling supports; a display case of lighting equipment; mining safety clothing and breathing equipment.

some small sense of what working conditions in a mine were like.

The tour starts with an elevator ride to the top of the tower and a 360-degree view of the surrounding area with city, town and distance markers on the windows.

A stairway adorned with large photographs of the region's mines from the 19th and 20th centuries winds down through the rest of the museum, but the elevator is also an option for reaching the lower floors.

English-language information is sparse; on several occasions I had to use Google's translate app to decipher the information presented by an exhibit. But many of the items are labeled and paired with pictures, such as a toilet bucket with a picture from 1976 of a man demonstrating how to use it.

After you crouch under ceiling supports through the first section of the museum's un-

derground section, you can stand up straight again and see a fully stocked mining tool workshop, a miner's train and a whole slew of extraction equipment that looks like it's just waiting for someone to flip the switch to harvest fossil fuel from the rocks.

My visit took just over an hour and a half, which left me plenty of time to explore the park that surrounds the mining museum and its wonderful collection of miniature, world-famous buildings and landmarks.

There are scaled models of London's Big Ben, a section of the Berlin Wall and a nearly 32-foot-tall Eiffel Tower replica, to name a few. Best of all, admission to the park is free and it's open all year.

After all that, if you still haven't had your fill of exploring underground sites, check out the Schlossberg Caves (tinyurl.com/y6oxf8nn) in nearby Homburg.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Niederbexbacher Str. 62, 66450 Bexbach
Free parking is available in a large lot across the street.

TIMES

9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends and holidays from March 1-Sept. 30; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. weekends and holidays from Oct. 1-Feb. 28; Last admission is 60 minutes before closing; closed Dec. 24 and Dec. 31.

COSTS

4.80 euros (\$5.94) for adults and 3.80 euros (\$4.70) for students. Family tickets for two adults and children are 10 euros (\$12.37).

FOOD

There are several restaurants in Bexbach and more choices in nearby Homburg.

INFORMATION

Phone: (+49) (0)6826-4887, website (in German, but Google's translate to English function works well): www.saarl-bergbau-museum-bexbach.de

— Michael B. Keller



WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Cardiff, South Wales deserve tourist love

Just an hour from major English destinations such as Bath and the Cotswolds, spunky Cardiff offers a taste of Welsh flavors sure to leave you with great memories.

Most travelers planning a trip to Britain don't realize you can hop a train in London and, in a bit more than two hours, find yourself in Wales' revitalized capital. From there, you can easily side-trip to an open-air museum to experience traditional Welsh folklore, or head into the lush Wye Valley to visit romantic Tintern Abbey.

Cardiff, like so many Industrial Age giants, has reemerged with fresh vigor from its time as a run-down, rust-belt city. Its castle has medieval intrigue as well as Victorian bling, its downtown is vibrant, and its port — which shipped 20 percent of the world's fuel when coal was king — is now a delightful place to stroll.

While not on many bucket lists, underrated Cardiff (pop. 350,000) offers plenty of reasons to visit. Rugby and soccer fans know it as the home of Principality Stadium — famous for having Britain's first fully retractable roof. Sci-fi fans know Cardiff as the place where "Doctor Who" is filmed. But the Welsh primarily value it as their proud political and cultural capital. To savor its atmosphere, stroll through one of the many impressive Victorian-era arcades burrowing through the city center, check out a smattering of museums, and wander the impressively modern waterfront.

One of the top sights is Cardiff Castle, a fun complex that contains within its medieval wall bits of fortresses erected here since Roman times. It was the Normans in the 11th century who made the most impact, building a fortified tower (or "keep") on a man-made island (a style known as "motte-and-bailey"). After rummaging the ramparts and climbing the keep, you can also check out a WWII bomb shelter, an impressive Welsh military museum, and some Victorian-

era castle apartments — which are not very historic, but dazzling just the same. Rebuilt by John Crichton-Stuart, whose income from the thriving coal trade made him one of Europe's wealthiest men in the late 1860s, the rooms were turned into a whimsical, fantastical take on the Middle Ages. It's the Welsh equivalent of "Mad" King Ludwig's fairy-tale castles in Bavaria (built in the same Romantic decade).



Rick Steves

After this dose of history, head down to the revamped Docklands area on Cardiff Bay to discover Cardiff's most lively and thriving development. I like to get here by scenic boat from downtown, slowly ambling down the River Taff.

The one-time world capital of the coal industry, Cardiff was nicknamed "Coalopolis" during the steam-powered Industrial Revolution, when Welsh coal was recognized as the world's finest. But by the mid-1960s the last shipment left Cardiff and, as it did in many blue-collar British towns, its economy slumped severely.

The Docklands have since been revitalized with state-of-the-art facilities (such as the impressive Wales Millennium Centre, a performing-arts space) and built up by side with restored historic buildings and the Senedd, a futuristic government center.

Cardiff can also be used as a springboard to some of the most interesting sights in South Wales. Just 30 minutes away is St. Fagans National History Museum, the best look anywhere at Welsh life of the pre-industrial era. I think of museums like this as culture on a lazy Susan



Rick Steves/Ricksteves.com

Sometimes called the "Welsh Big Ben," the landmark Pierhead Building dominates the waterfront in Cardiff's Docklands district.

— a one-stop way to experience traditional lifestyles across a wide geographical area. And this 100-acre open-air museum, currently in the midst of a \$42 million renovation, has more than 40 carefully reconstructed and fully furnished historic buildings from all corners of Wales, as well as a "castle" (actually a Tudor-era manor house) that offers a glimpse of how the other half lived. The workshops here feature busy craftspeople eager to demonstrate their skills. Each house comes equipped with a local expert happy to tell you anything you want to know about life in his or her old cottage.

Romantics should consider seeing the beloved Tintern Abbey, immortalized in verse by William Wordsworth and on canvas (by J. M. W. Turner). Founded in 1131 on a site chosen for its tranquility, it functioned as a Cistercian abbey until it was dissolved under Henry VIII. Few

ruined abbeys are as big, as remarkably intact, or as picturesquely situated. Most of the external walls of the 250-foot-long, 150-foot-wide church still stand, along with its exquisite window tracery and outlines of the sacristy, chapter house and dining hall. The daylight that floods through the roofless ruins highlights the Gothic decorated arches — in those days a bold departure from Cistercian simplicity.

Wales is often overshadowed by its neighbors England and Scotland, and South Wales is often passed over for the more dramatic castles and scenery in the north. But in the Cardiff region you'll get a great dose of history and a glimpse of its bright future — all with a lifting Welsh accent.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Belgian brews in Tournai

Handsome and history-rich Tournai is a Walloon city in western Belgium just a stone's throw from the French border. Through the weekend of this city that all too often falls off the tourist's radar offers the chance to sample more than 100 domestic brews in a country renowned for its beers.

The Brassicole de Tournai is a young festival that's seen its visitor numbers grow steadily since its inception in 2011. This year's edition presents the tasty output of nearly 30 breweries, whose brewers are on hand to speak about how their beers are made and answer questions. The festival takes place in La Halle Aux Draps on the Grand-Place. Festival hours are 2 p.m.-midnight March 24 and 11 a.m.-9 p.m. March 25. Entry is free, although a tasting glass to sample the wares is an essential tool. Beers are purchased through a token system; these are available on site. Online: tournai-beer-festival.com

New year twice in Tuscany

If 2018 didn't start out optimally, you can always fast forward to 2019 by traveling to Florence or Pisa, Italy, where the start of a



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

new year is celebrated twice. According to the Catholic church calendar, March 25 is the Feast of the Annunciation, when the archangel Gabriel informed the Virgin Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God. The Anno Domini calendar assigned the beginning of the new year to this date. Although the Gregorian calendar came into force in 1582, the Florentines and the Pisans remained true to their traditions until as late as 1749, when the Grand Duke Francesco III of Lorraine obliged everyone to recognize Jan. 1 as the start of the new year. In Pisa, the new year is

marked by a natural phenomenon: a marble egg in the cathedral is hit by a sunbeam piercing through its window. Marchers in historical costumes, flag wavers, bowsmen and other characters can be found in the streets starting in midmorning, particularly near the church of S. Giorgio ai Tedeschi and the Piazza dei Miracoli. Florence celebrates with a historical parade that gets underway at 2:45 p.m. from the Repubblica Fiorentina, stopping at the Basilica di Santissima Annunziata for services at 3:30 p.m. and finishing around 4:30 p.m. Online: tinyurl.com/y89nXmo.

Open monuments in Italy

On an early spring weekend each year, Italy's elegant palaces, hidden gardens and sites of historical importance extend a warm welcome to visitors. The 26th edition of FAI Spring Days, scheduled for March 24-25, will see more than 1,000 landmarks, many normally off-limits to the public, offer guided tours, lectures and other activities.

"Giornate FAI di Primavera" are organized and promoted by the Fondo Ambiente Italiano, known as FAI for short. The organization works to promote and protect the vast riches of Italy's



© Festival Brassicole de Tournai

The Brassicole de Tournai in western Belgium offers products from about 30 breweries. Brewers are on hand to answer questions.

cultural heritage and is fueled by the efforts of many passionate volunteers. As FAI's main target audience is the Italians themselves, don't expect a wealth of information or tours to be available in English.

Open venues in 2018 include a cathedral's ossuary, medieval monasteries, the remains of a thermal spring, the source of a green river, and countless other beautiful and evocative locations. Entry may be limited to a few time slots daily, or a place put off limits altogether, should

visitor numbers grow too great for the site to support. Most places suggest an entry fee of 3 euros. A search function on FAI's website indicates which monuments are open in a specific city or province.

FAI's activities are supported through the sales of annual membership cards, which entitle the bearer to significant discounts at more than 1,500 cultural institutions throughout Italy. They cost 39 euros for adults, 60 euros for a couple, and 66 euros for a family. Online: tinyurl.com/ybjee9mu

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe

'Gramma's food'

Changing tastes are killing German restaurants

BY MAURA JUDKIS
The Washington Post

When you think of the quintessential German restaurant in the United States, you're thinking of a place like Karl Ratsch. Ever since it was founded by German immigrants in 1904, it had a menu full of schnitzel, spaetzle and other hearty Bavarian staples. The interior was dark wood, with German coats of arms, hand-painted beer steins, a beautiful Bavarian cuckoo clock and servers in dirndls. The place was a Milwaukee institution: Frank Lloyd Wright, Liberator and President Richard Nixon dined there. Karl Ratsch's was handed down through generations.

It didn't last. In 1993, Karl Ratsch III was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, with a suicide note left among the mounting bills. In 2003, the family sold it to employees. Despite a renovation, the restaurant eventually closed for good last year.

All across the United States, German restaurants are calling it quits. In Portland, Ore., Der Rheinlander closed in 2016 after 53 years. Outside of Boulder, Colo., the Black Forest Restaurant closed last summer after 59 years. The Old German Schnitzel House in Hickory, N.C., served its last sauerkraut in 2014, lasting 10 years. One of Nashville's oldest restaurants, Gerst Haus, died last month after 62 years. That's 10 years longer than the Chicago Brauhaus, which closed in December.

So long to Knoxville, Tenn.'s Grujo's German Restaurant. Farewell to Zum Rheingarten, in Stafford, Va. Auf Wiedersehen to Victor Koenig's, which lasted 71 years on Long Island. Goodnight, Old Heidelberg, in Bethel, Conn.

According to Yelp data scientist Carl Bialik, German food ranked number 83 of the 100 biggest restaurant categories in growth. In a 2015 National Restaurant Association study, only 7 percent of respondents said they ate German food at least once a month — less than Italian (61 percent), Mexican (50 percent), Chinese (36 percent) and 11 additional categories, including Southeast Asian and even Belgian. It tied French and Vietnamese, and eked out a small lead over Indian, Caribbean and Scandinavian food. Respondents said they were more likely to eat German food at home than at a restaurant. But the cuisine ranked high in familiarity. People know about German food, but apparently aren't seeking it out.

The biggest wave of German immigration was in the 1880s, followed by another after World War II. Germans, who settled mostly in the Midwest and Texas, were at one point America's largest ethnic group, so their food has always been highly influential. Hamburger is from Hamburg, the hot dog is from Frankfurt and chicken fried steak is just Americanized wiener schnitzel.

German food's decline "reflects the cultural mix of this country toward more Latin-American, Asian and African-American culture, and less of the mainstream Germanic culture that influenced this country for many decades," said Armin von Friedeburg, an importer of German foods and the founder of Germanfoods.org. "The cultural shift is going on, and German culture has to fight or compete to keep its relevance."

The cuisine's history here might be part of the reason, too. It's "Grandma's food," Hauck said. At a time when American eaters seem interested in sampling new-to-them cuisines — Native American food is the new poke in the Midwest, the new Filipino — German food seems stodgy. And in the age of Instagram, it suffers from an acute case of brown.

It's also healthy, heavy and boasts enough starches to make ketogenic, gluten-free Whole 30 adherents lose their minds — which makes it seem out of place in our food-culture-obsessed era. "It's that meat-and-potatoes stigma," said Alex Herold, the owner of Old Europe, a German res-



DEB LINDSEY/For The Washington Post

Dishes at Old Europe (clockwise from top right): Potato pancakes, beef goulash with spaetzle, currywurst, pork hocks with sauerkraut, and potato dumplings topped with beer gravy.

taurant in Washington celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. The reputation persists despite the fact that in northern Germany, dishes are lighter and have much in common with trendy Scandinavian food.

The future of German restaurants in the United States might be a tiny restaurant in Richmond, Va.'s Union Hill neighborhood, called Metzger Bar and Butchery. Instead of a massive beer hall, it's a petite corner spot that seats about 30 people. It's bright and airy, decorated with subway tile and nose-to-tail butchery posters. The servers do not dress in lederhosen.

The restaurant was founded by Brittanny Anderson, who claims no German heritage whatsoever. Because one of her partners in the restaurant owns a sausage company, her original plan was a casual wurst joint — but that evolved after she got interested in traditional German cooking.

"German food is so much more related to French food than people give it credit for," Anderson said. "A coq au vin on a menu, you will know what it is. But if you put Hosenleber on the menu, people are like, 'What the hell?'"

Instead of reproducing the dishes faithfully, Anderson puts more modern versions on her menu, often inspired by her dog-eared copy of Mimi Sheraton's "The German Cookbook." Instead of gravy on her schnitzel, "We make a big salad with fennel and fennel fronds and fried capers, because we want to lighten it up," she said. "We cook with things that anybody would taste and recognize that vibe of being those German or Eastern European flavors, but we will use seasonal ingredients and modern American technique."

That means serving some things that aren't German at all. At Metzger, you can get a riff on a Negroni, a sunchoke salad, even scallops. "If you're a chef like me and you want to create things and grow, you kind of have to take those ideas and move them forward," she said.

If enough other chefs do that, perhaps German food could become trendy again.



PHOTOS BY MARTIN EGNASH/Stars and Stripes

The exterior of Korean Restaurant Bab in Grafenwoehr, Germany, might not inspire, but tasty barbecue beef and kimchi await inside.

After Hours: Germany

BY MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

Outside the rear gate of the Grafenwoehr army post is what appears to be a Korean hole-in-the-wall eatery tucked between several drive bars. But like the Mines of Moria, this hole is full of treasure.

Korean Restaurant Bab serves up fantastic East Asian food at a great price, and if you like barbecue beef, this is the mother lode.

A fan favorite is the spicy beef bulgogi — Korean barbecue, marinated in soy sauce and pear juice, and served on a bed of grilled onions.

However, I prefer the bibimbap, which to me sounds a lot like that Hanson song.

The bibimbap is like a stir fry of vegetables, beef Bulgogi and an egg, served atop rice in a hot stone bowl. You can get it with a spicy chili pepper-based sauce, which gives it a kick that's hard to find in the German cuisine of the area.

They have lots of appetizers as well, like the bulgogi kimbab, a seaweed-wrapped rice roll with BBQ beef, egg and vegetables, or several varieties of dumplings stuffed with meat or vegetables.

The most well-known Korean food to Americans, kimchi, is abundant on the menu. If you're not familiar with it, don't expect something as boring as sauerkraut. Germany's own fermented cabbage. Kimchi packs a lot of spice and flavor.

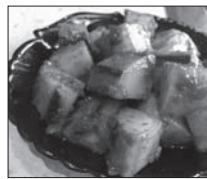
Bab's kimchi comes in three types: cabbage, cucumber and radish. You can get small orders of these for as little as 1.50 euros (\$1.84). I tried all three and highly recommend the radish kimchi. It's crunchy, spicy and has a kick.

They serve several zesty soups there as well that are big enough to be meals in themselves. I recommend the kimchi beef soup or any of the fried noodle soups.

To drink, they have a variety of German beer and several nonalcoholic options like barley tea, which tastes a bit like green tea but earthier.

If you're looking for something different around Grafenwoehr, and you want a lot of barbecue beef, this is the place to go.

egdash.martin@starsandstripes.com
Twitter: @Marty_Stripes



From top to bottom: Bibimbap, bulgogi kimbab and cucumber kimchi, which is abundant on Korean Restaurant Bab's menu.

KOREAN RESTAURANT BAB

Address: Alte Amberger Str. 35, 92655 Grafenwoehr
Hours: Tuesday-Friday 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for lunch and 5:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. for dinner. Saturday and Sunday 11:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Closed on Mondays.
Prices: Around 10 euros for a meal
Dress: Casual
Phone: (+49) 09641 9298778

— Martin Egnash

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Picturesque countryside

Trulli — stone cottages with conical roofs — can be found in Puglia, Italy

By CAIN BURDEAU
Associated Press

There are no famous historical figures to discover in the Valle d'Itria in Italy's central Puglia, no city of note with theaters and great cathedrals. Instead, it's a quiet place of rolling green hills, meandering country roads, endless stone walls, earthy food and wine.

But there is one magical, must-see attraction: stone cottages with conical roofs called trulli, grouped together in the town of Alberobello, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

At its heart, a trullo is a simple farm building, a heap of field stones piled on top of each other, topped with a stone cone roof, called the candelà. The structures have a fairy-tale quality to them, often enhanced by mystical symbols painted on the candelas that scholars trace to Jewish, Christian and pagan origins. Decorative pinnacles cap the roofs, shaped like spheres, disks, stars and crosses.

Nicola Loperfido, a 36-year-old craftsman, was making replicas of trulli in his workshop as he tried to explain their appeal. The circular shape evokes the cycles of life and seasons for a farmer. This circularity is expressed in other ways too: Old trulli villages had a circular central piazza called iazzelle. The trullo, he said, symbolizes "the integration humans had with their land."

Land and stone

The pleasure of the Valle d'Itria lies in timeless things: seasonal changes, the play of light on paddocks and olive orchards, the cascade of brilliantly pink almond blossoms in the spring, the mist and fog of winter, the solitary farmer working a field, bird song.

A visitor can go for hours, days even, just observing fields of durum wheat, legumes, olives, almonds, patches of chicory, tomatoes, zucchini, bell peppers, spinach, broccoli rabe; walking long stretches of stone walls girding red-colored fields; stopping at altars on the sides

of roads in an endless maze of old sheep tracks called i tratturelli.

There's a strange geology afoot here, too. The Valle d'Itria is one of the world's rare karst zones, consisting of layers of limestone a foot beneath the surface. To reach water, wells must be dug 1,150 feet or more. As an alternative, water has been collected in cisterns and ditches since ancient times.

Despite the rocky ground, farming is not just doable, it thrives. The limestone acts as a sponge, farmers say. The valley also enjoys, and suffers, from high humidity. It's good for agriculture, but can make

daily life unpleasant, with water dripping down the inside walls of homes and a feeling of dampness for much of the year.

Food and lodging

People settled here centuries ago, fleeing the coasts, conflict and incursions by Saracens, Goths and others. Beginning in Roman times, the valley was divided into large estates given to Roman soldiers for their service. This system helped turn the area into one of Italy's most valued agricultural regions with distinctive olive oil, red and white wines and other products. Some of the region's foods are world-

famous, like burrata cheese, capocollo most sausage, fava bean dishes, almond biscuits, digestive liqueurs called rosoli and dry breads called frise and taralli.

"The vegetables and fruit have a better taste than anywhere else because of the goodness of the land," said Gennaro Santoro, a 75-year-old winemaker.

Agriturismos and masserias — farms that offer lodging — have sprouted up. Restaurants and roadside inns serve delicious country fare. And strolls through town centers are perfumed with the smell of food wafting out from kitchens.

Architecture sans architects

The Valle d'Itria is a stupendous example of Mediterranean architecture with whitewashed buildings and curvaceous lines. But it's the genius of the stonework and trulli that's truly distinctive here.

Limestone structures are ubiquitous: castles, town walls, government edifices, churches. They were mostly built without mortar and often without lumber. Home walls are commonly 6.5 feet thick.

"A great masterpiece of architecture without architects," commented the Japanese architectural historian Hidenobu Jinnai in describing Cisterno, one of the valley's more picturesque hilltop towns.

"From the Adriatic to Ireland you find these kinds of structures," explained Leonardo Antonio Palmisano, an architect who specializes in trulli, as he oversaw work to incorporate an abandoned trullo into a new modern home near Locorotondo, home to the region's master trullo builders.

The most famous trullo is in Alberobello, the Trullo Sovrano. Today it is a museum.

Traditionally, trulli were simple homes for farmers and served agricultural purposes: a place to make wine, store tools and animals. They eventually were largely abandoned, considered too cold and damp to live in. But these days many have been bought and turned into modern homes. Others lie in ruins throughout the valley, falling down and overrun by weeds and trees. Even in a dilapidated state, their carefully laid walls and pinnacles seem magical.



Onofrio Urso hoes on a piece of land last year in Puglia's fertile Valle d'Itria in Italy where he grows a variety of vegetables and fruit.

Nicola Loperfido, an artisan in Alberobello, Italy, makes small replicas of trulli — singular cone-roofed stone country structures — and their symbols. Alberobello is in Puglia's Valle d'Itria.



PHOTOS BY CAIN BURDEAU/AP

An abandoned trullo and farm in the Valle d'Itria, a quiet place in Puglia, Italy.



Economy class doesn't leave much legroom for anyone, but is especially unkind to tall airplane passengers.

Tall passengers and how they cope with plane travel

Jim Fox dreads flying.

With good reason. At 6-feet-10, the former NBA player has to squeeze himself into economy class seats, which isn't always possible.

On a recent flight from Phoenix to London, he wedged himself into the seat for takeoff and landing. "The rest of the time, I had to sit in the jump seat in the back of the plane," he remembers. The jump seats, usually located in the forward and rear of the aircraft, are normally used by flight attendants and have ample legroom because there are no seats in front of them.

"The seats weren't always this small," remembers Fox, who began playing professional basketball in 1967, a full decade before airline deregulation. He's right. The average seat pitch, a rough measure of legroom, has shrunk from 35 inches when Fox started flying in the late 1960s to about 31 inches today. While some of the reductions are partially the result of new seat technologies that allow for thinner seats, the amount of personal room has also dwindled dramatically.

In a world of disappearing space on aircraft, tall passengers are coping by avoiding air travel, paying more for their seats or honing their negotiation skills. But a long-term solution might need to involve thoughtful government oversight, or at least a joint effort by the airline industry to help its tall passengers.

Rarely does an airline announce it will pull the seats closer together. Instead, it touts an "improvement." For example, JetBlue Airways, which has the most legroom in economy class among the major domestic airlines, announced an overhaul of its cabins last year that, by the way, would reduce its legroom by two inches, to just 32 inches. The struggles of tall passengers raise interesting questions. Do they deserve special protections when they fly? Tallness isn't considered a disability under federal law, so airlines aren't required to offer special accommodations to these large passengers. If they do, however, then what about the wider passengers who can't fit into standard economy class seats? That discussion opens a Pandora's box and threatens to make air travel, America's most class-conscious experience, even more segregated.

— Christopher Elliott
Special to The Washington Post

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific



PHOTOS BY WYATT OLSON/Stars and Stripes

Diners enjoy lunch at Human Cuisine in Honolulu. It is located on the northern tip of Chinatown.

After Hours: Hawaii

BY WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

Revolutionary Chinese leader Mao Zedong famously said that if you can't endure the heat of red peppers, you'll never be much of a fighter.

The claim was more or less a boast about the food he'd grown up eating in Hunan Province in south-central China. There, the red chili pepper is king—or, as is more appropriate of China, emperor.

The red pepper is also the star at Honolulu's Human Cuisine restaurant, where the only thing pedestrian is the name of the place. It lies on the northern tip of Chinatown and is easy to overlook whether driving or walking. But it's a gem with perhaps the best, most authentic Hunan food in the city.

If you're at all a newbie to Hunan-style food, the restaurant makes it less daunting to try. The menu includes many photos of dishes, and much larger photos of all the dishes decorate the walls. Hunan food uses a wide variety of chili peppers, but they are usually either dried or pickled in vinegar.

Most of us don't actually eat the dried chilies in the dishes—we can't all be revolutionaries—and for the most part they're not intended to be consumed. Instead, they infuse the food with slow-burning heat that will make you put down your chopsticks mid-meal for a break.

First, order from the Hunan Specialties section of the menu, as you won't typically find these at many Chinese restaurants.

Start with one of the griddle dishes, which all capture the quintessential Hunan flavors. Choices are beef tendon, beef tripe, lamb, pork intestine, fish fillet (all \$19.95) and sliced potato (\$14.95).

The griddle dishes are heated over a flame on your table, so



The griddle lamb at Human Cuisine in Honolulu simmers on a flame that keeps it piping hot.



Fried pickled bean with mince meat is a stir-fried mixture of ground pork and chopped, marinated Chinese snake beans from Human Cuisine in Honolulu.

HUNAN CUISINE

Location: 53 N. Beretania St., Honolulu, Hawaii
Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Sunday through Thursday; 10:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday
Prices: Hunan specialty dishes cost between \$9.95 and \$26.95; appetizers, \$2.80 to \$6.95; stir-fried dishes with meat or seafood, \$10.95 to \$16.95
Dress: Casual
Directions: From Waikiki Beach, head east on Ala Wai Boulevard, then take a right onto Kalakaua Avenue. In about three-quarters of a mile, turn left onto Beretania Street and drive two miles. Restaurant is on the left on the corner of the block. Meter parking on surrounding streets.
Information: 808-599-8838
 —Wyatt Olson

you'll watch as the ingredients smothered in red chili sauce begin a slow boil.

Like all dishes at this restaurant, they are communal, or family-style. The griddle dishes serve at least two very hungry people and twice that if you order more than two other dishes for your meal here.

My personal favorite is the lamb, with ample slabs of it heaped over noodles swimming in the sauce below. Lamb always needs to be served hot, and the flame below the griddle keeps it searing.

Oddly, Chairman Mao's red-braised pork (\$14.95), one of the best-known Hunan dishes, is not the chili-fest you might expect, given its namesake's devotion to hot peppers. Equally sweet and spicy, the pork belly is first sautéed in caramelized sugar, and then stir-fried in ginger, star anise, cinnamon and, of course, chilies.

For a little break from the heat, try the fried pickled bean with mince meat (\$10.95). This is Chinese snake beans—green beans that grow about a foot long—finely chopped and then marinated to an exquisite sourness. They're then stir-fried with ground pork.

The people of Hunan are fond of their green beans, so you'll find them included in many of the dishes. The green string beans with eggplant dish (\$9.95) contains more of the latter than the former, and it's firm and flavorful.

If you want to go full-Hunan, then you'll have to order the steamed fish head with chopped peppers (market price). It's a humongous fish head (and neck), with a surprisingly ample amount of meat to be found in its cheeks and skull.

Hard-core Hunan food aficionados will goggle up the eyes and cartilage, which have been steeped in the spicy blend of chopped chilies that cap the head.

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'Ramen Heads': Documentary a deep dive into broth with Japan's ramen king

BY MAURA JUDKIS
The Washington Post

The best ramen shops in Japan don't give up their secrets easily. But it's not necessarily because they're worried about competitors. "The truth is, they just don't want people to see that they're not doing anything special," says chef Osamu Tomita, who presides over his humble restaurant in Matsudo, outside Tokyo, as Japan's reigning ramen champion. Tomita has won Best Ramen of the Year from Japan's most prestigious ramen guidebook four years in a row.

Tomita—who decidedly is doing something special—is the subject of "Ramen Heads," a culinary documentary about a master at the top of his craft. We get to dwell in his closet-size shop with him, as he stirs whole pigs' heads, seaweed and dried fish into his broth and prepares his handmade noodles. Cue the luscious slow-mos of pearlescent broth being poured into bowls and its condiments delicately arranged.

"There is nothing clean and pretty about this broth," said Tomita, and he's right: It looks like sludge. To a certain kind of fanatic, however—it's the film's "ramen heads"—it's liquid gold.

Of course, there are parallels to be drawn between this film's subject and Jiro Ono, the master sushi chef profiled in the 2011 documentary "Jiro Dreams of Sushi." Both are obsessed with their craft and accept nothing less than perfection.

But where Ono's restaurant is sparse, elegant and expensive, Tomita's cheap bowls of comfort food are all about more: making it richer, deeper, creamier, meatier. It's ego versus id, the difference between fine dining and a messy cheeseburger. Both are great, but which one will satisfy you more?

Although "Ramen Heads" is an interesting glance at the craft of ramen, it ends up feeling lukewarm. When the film segues into short portraits of other ramen chefs who specialize in different styles of the soup, it's interesting, but incomplete. You'd have to be a bit of a ramen head yourself, with a working knowledge of how tonkotsu differs from tsukemen, and shoyu from shio, to appreciate the film: Many of the terms are not explained.

Life in Tomita's shop is difficult. The chef is strict with his apprentices, correcting their grammar, chewing them out and never actually teaching them the necessary skills: "If they want the knowledge, they'll have to steal it by tasting and watching," says a narrator. "He's not a normal guy."

And Tomita himself has some amusing eccentricities. When the staff does finally have a meal, they all eat from the same bowl.

It doesn't add up to that much, other than to inspire, perhaps, a certain wanderlust. Still, the film has its moments. Yolk porn—a fascination with the visual beauty of egg yolk—has become a bit of an internet food cliché, but one of the most beautiful parts of the film is when Tomita plucks a marinated egg from a tray and pinches it open with his thumbs, revealing a yolk inside that's the color and consistency of honey. It's perfect. "I charge 100 yen (about \$1) for this egg," he says, "so it better be the best damn 100 yen marinated egg in Japan."



FILMBUFF-GUNPOWDER AND SKY/The Washington Post

Japan's most prestigious ramen guidebook has awarded chef Osamu Tomita the title of best ramen of the year for four years running. Tomita is the subject of a culinary documentary.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific



LEON COOK/Stars and Stripes

The Daigo Fukuryu Maru, or Lucky Dragon No. 5, a fishing boat that was exposed to radioactive fallout from the first hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll, is on display at Yumenoshima Park in Tokyo.

Fallout boat

Fishing vessel exposed to hydrogen bomb test can be seen in Tokyo park

BY LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

An old wooden fishing boat displayed in an odd-looking building at Tokyo's Yumenoshima Park survived a nuclear explosion and helped inspire the Godzilla film series.

The Daigo Fukuryu Maru, or Lucky Dragon No. 5, sailed into history in 1954 when it was accidentally exposed to fallout from the U.S. military's first hydrogen bomb test.

The boat — small for an ocean-going vessel at 97 feet long and 140 tons and only capable of 5 knots — proved anything but lucky during its ill-fated voyage.

On March 1, 1954, the Lucky Dragon was fishing near Bikini Atoll when the U.S. conducted the Castle Bravo test of the world's first hydrogen bomb. The blast was more than twice as powerful as predicted with 1,000 times the energy of the bomb that leveled Hiroshima. Fallout spread well beyond the no-sail zone,

which had been declared in advance.

The fishing boat's crew reported a flash in the west before ash started falling from the sky. The crew decided to sail away but were covered in fallout during the several hours it took to reel in their costly fishing gear.

The ash — calcinated and highly-radioactive coral from the atoll — coated the fishermen's hair and skin and got inside their mouths. By the time they arrived at their home port near Tokyo, two weeks later, the entire crew suffered from acute radiation sickness.

All were sent to hospitals, and radio operator Aikichi Kuboyama died several months later. He was the first person killed by a hydrogen bomb.

The incident was an inspiration for the movie "Godzilla," released that year.

The Japanese government bought the boat and renamed it Hayabusa Maru. After radiation levels abated, it served as a training vessel for the Tokyo Department of Fisheries before being decommissioned in 1967.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Located at Yumenoshima Park, the Lucky Dragon is a 10-minute walk from Shin-Kiba Station on the Rinkai Line.

TIMES

9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday. Closed Mondays, and Tuesday if Monday is a public holiday.

COSTS

Free

FOOD

No food onsite or in the park, but dining opportunities abound near Shin-Kiba Station.

INFORMATION

03-3521-8494; www.dsf.org

— Leon Cook

The Lucky Dragon sat rotting and forgotten in a garbage heap on Yumenoshima Island until a group of concerned citizens petitioned for its preservation. In 1976, it went on display at the park.

Admission to the Daigo Fukuryu Maru Exhibition Hall, where the boat is displayed, is free. It isn't much larger than the vessel itself and includes information in Japanese and knock-knocks for the crew.

One of the few English-language signs is outside, next to an unassuming stone monument to the Lucky Dragon's haul of fish. The ship's catch was, incredibly, sent to market despite the crew's condition, and authorities had to scramble to find the radioactive tuna before anyone bought it. They were mostly successful, and the contaminated catch was buried near Tsukiji Market.

The boat is a popular destination for Japanese school trips, but the scarcity of information for foreigners made me glad I'd researched the place before I went.

cook.leon@stripes.com
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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific

The Japanese Alps in winter offer snow, sake & monkeys in hot springs



GEORGE HORICA/TNS

Visitors to the Japanese Alps can stop by Jigokudani. The site has active hot springs in which wild troops of Japanese macaque monkeys steep in winter.

By GEORGE HORICA
Tribune News Service

It was coming on winter in Los Angeles, and I was missing snow. Boston-born, I missed snow's ozone aroma (snow does have a smell, you know). I missed its soft crunch under my feet. And coincidentally, I also was missing Japan, a land that has fascinated me ever since third grade when, for a show-and-tell project, at the suggestion of Mrs. Reggolino, who also had a Japan thing going on, I built a traditional Japanese home out of balsa wood and paper, complete with shoji screens (yes, I was a precocious child). Some places I visit only once and see no need to return. Others, such as Japan, I have visited multiple times. I love the food and culture, but mostly I love the people and the respect they show each other and to visitors.

For example: although children are as rambunctious here as anywhere, in the Japan Airlines airport lounge once I noticed a mother bringing her fidgety child inside an enclosed phone booth to avoid annoying others (and listened enviously to a public address announcement asking people to make mobile phone calls inside those booths for the same reason).

One memorable visit to Tokyo, in 2011, hadn't gone as planned. My friend David and I landed on March 12. The next day found us at Tokyo Disney. And then the largest earthquake ever recorded struck. All the trains stopped running, and that night we spent shivering in a light drizzle until the park thought it safe to shelter us indoors. The following night we dined on Kobe beef at the Park

Hyatt Tokyo watching the wine in our glasses shimmer slightly with each aftershock. The following day, I was on American Airlines back to Los Angeles.

And while I'd visited many times since then, I'd never made it beyond Tokyo.

So here I was again, this time in the depths of winter, in the Japanese Alps, and there was snow, freshly fallen and deep. My

journey took me to Tsumago, Magome, Takakayama, Shirakawa-go and Gokayama, getting around by train and road.

I knew about Mount Fuji (you can see it from Tokyo on a clear day), but I had no idea until I opened my Michelin Green Guide that Japan consists mostly of sparsely inhabited mountains. In fact, I further learned, mountains cover two-thirds of Japan and most of these areas are uninhabited, so 127 million people live in the remaining topography.

Tsumago-juku, an old "post town" surrounded by mountains, is one of the 69 such towns along the Nakasendo, a stone-paved route dating from the 17th century, designed to connect Edo (modern-day Tokyo) and Kyoto. Today, many of the original historic buildings remain.

In one of them I encountered Jun Obara, a true local "character" as my friend Sumiko called him as we left his shop house. He grew up in Tsumago (population 600), studied art and fashion in Tokyo, and returned to look after his elderly parents. In the traditional house of his birth, one of 223 restored and preserved buildings in the town, he makes men's and women's clothing in fabrics, patterns and color combinations like nothing you've ever seen. He designs and weaves the cotton fabric himself (he won't reveal where the yarn originates) in patterns he designs. He even built the loom they're woven on. The iridescent fabrics in greens, blues and burnt orange, one of which depicts Edo-era firemen, based on historic drawings, will definitely get a conversation going anywhere in the world. He's opening his first purpose-built shop in Osaka this spring, and some of his creations are one of a kind.

"I just want to support myself doing something I love," he tells me with Sumiko translating.

From Tsumago, I visited Magome, another post town of restored traditional homes and shops, about a three-hour walk along the Nakasendo (you can also travel by bus, and for \$5 the tourist office will forward your bags between the two towns if you do opt for a stroll). Here, among other relics, I saw a mill wheel powered by water melting from the mountain snow, once used for grinding grains. Many structures date from the 17th and 18th centuries.

In Takayama, surrounded by mountains reaching 10,000 feet in altitude, I visited several local sake breweries offering tastings, one of which has been in operation since 1695, and a museum housing the elaborately decorated floats paraded through town each year during twice-yearly festivals. Gourmets, however, come here for the area's famous fork-tender hida beef which, some say, rivals better-known Japanese varieties.

The trip from Takayama to Shirakawa-go and Gokayama, both UNESCO World Heritage sites, will take you three hours along mostly traffic-free, two-lane roads, or you can take a coach tour if you'd prefer not to drive. The larger and busier of the two, Shirakawa-go, sees more than 30 feet of snow each winter, making it one of Japan's snowiest regions. Both villages are famous for their gassho-zukuri farm houses, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, with steep thatched roofs designed to prevent snow from gathering. Many of them welcome overnight guests, providing food and lodging (you'll be sleeping on traditional futons and using shared facilities), for \$50 to \$100 a night with breakfast and dinner, while others offer tours. The nearby and less-developed Gokayama sees fewer tourists and when I toured Suganuma and Ainokura, two smaller gassho-zukuri villages in the area, I was only one of a few visitors and I could enjoy strolling around without distraction.

The last stop on my tour, before heading back to Tokyo by Shinkansen bullet train from Nagano, was to Jigokudani (roughly translated as hell's valley) owing to its active hot springs spewing constant plumes of sulfurous steam, home to wild troops of Japanese macaque monkeys that, in winter, enjoy steeping in the warm waters. On my visit, the monkeys were merely drinking from a pool of steaming water rather than bathing in it. Camera-toting visitors waited patiently, but to no avail, for the creatures to jump in. Perhaps the air temperature wasn't quite cold enough. More info online at jigokudani-yaenkoen.co.jp.

Speaking of cold, yes, it's pretty chilly in the Japanese Alps in wintertime, so bundle up. But they're also beautiful in spring, summer, and especially in the fall when the foliage is in full color. On my next visit to Japan, I hope to explore other rural areas. Tokyo is exciting and fascinating, but hop on a train and in a few hours you'll be in a whole different world.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Backward BOOKS

Is the popular, polarizing interior design trend

BY TRACEE M. HERBAUGH
Associated Press

Looking for an easy way to organize a messy bookshelf? You might consider turning all the spines backward.

Yes, the backward bookshelf is one of the easiest ways — albeit, not too functional — to clean up a hodgepodge of texts. It's also an interior design craze that's about as culturally divisive as national politics in America.

Advocates tout the simplistic texture of the pages, while opponents argue that the idea is just plain stupid since you can't see which books are which. Generally speaking, you love it or hate it.

The backward bookshelf began to trend in the mid-aughts, mostly as an artistic styling tool in photographs on small-scale design blogs or bookshop websites. Now, big-box retailers such as West Elm and The Container Store have incorporated backward bookshelves into their product displays.

A Google search for "backward books" will bring back millions of results, from sites including social-media mainstays like Pinterest and Instagram, various women's magazines and some interior design staples like Apartment Therapy.

of displaying your library with the spines turned inward

"I can see the appeal because a lot of times, if there's a lot of books in a room, people find it distracting or overwhelming," said Sarah Cole, a Boston-area interior designer. "But it's not super-functional, and unless the books are purely decorative, it just seems challenging."

Backward books, Cole said, do align with the neutral, monochromatic look that is popular now in design.

Achieving a simple, stylish look is exactly why Cari Shane turned her books backward. Four years ago, the public relations executive was renovating a 1914 row house in Washington, D.C., when her teenage daughter suggested the idea.

"I had these beautiful orange chairs for the living room and I needed something to set them off," Shane said. "I needed something that was going to let the chairs



COURTESY OF NATHAN SHAFER/AP

Nathan Shafer, posing in front of his bookshelf in Arvada, Colo., feels there is no point to a backward-facing bookshelf. "That's not what books are for," he said.

be the focal point."

The books used in the display were ones Shane had no plans to re-read.

"I couldn't tell you what books they



Left: Oliver Peacock stands in front of a backward-facing bookshelf at The Container Store in Chestnut Hill, Mass. Some big box retailers have jumped on this design craze for their product displays. Below: The checkout counter at indie bookseller Newtonville Books in Newton, Mass., is made of rows of backward books glued into place.

TRACEE M. HERBAUGH/AP



are," she said.

On the other hand, Nathan Shafer, a life-long reader and book collector, has filled his Arvada, Colo., home with hundreds of books, none of which face backward.

"They're entities, and when you turn them all backward it renders them one anonymous mass," Shafer said.

An anonymous mass, Shafer said, defies the purpose of books.

"They're for the unique words, the unique ideas, the unique characters inside them," he said. "Part of the reason for hanging onto books is so you can go back and find something. You can't do that if you're hiding every identifying mark."

There are occasions, however, when art is executed just right, at least according to the customers of Newtonville Books, an independent bookseller in Newton, Mass.

The store is known around the area for its intriguing counter filled with backward books in different sizes and colors.

The shop's owner, Mary Cotton, saw the styling tool on the website of an Australian bookstore six years ago.

"We wanted to do something that was really beautiful and interesting, some sort of book art project," she said.

An architect helped design and execute the plan. Customers ask what books were used to make the counter, but Cotton said they never wrote down the titles. Since the books are glued into place, there's no way of moving them.

"We had a lot of old used books that hadn't sold, and others we got from library sales and the covers were damaged," Cotton said. "I like it. It gives them another life. People seem to like it."

an artistic achievement, or a forgettable chapter?

WEEKEND: MUSIC



‘In Nashville, in particular, if you get dealt a fatal blow like what we got dealt in 2016, you don’t often get a second chance. So I knew if we were going to bet my career on anything, the resurgence of my career, I am going to bet on “Five More Minutes”.’

‘Feels like I am starting fresh’

BY KRISTIN M. HALL
Associated Press

Two years ago, country singer Scotty McCreery found out he lost his record deal with Mercury/Interscope while shooting an episode for “American Idol,” the show he won in 2011. He had come back to mentor new contestants on the show, which was then on Fox, but his own career was at a precipice.

“I was trying to put on a happy face while I was filming,” the 24-year-old singer with the baritone voice said. “That was a rough week.”

McCreery, who is from North Carolina, had started his career on a high at 18 by becoming the youngest male artist and first country artist to debut his first album on the Billboard 200. Although his albums sold well, McCreery leaned toward the more traditional side of the genre, when bro-country and party songs ruled the airwaves.

He managed to get some Top 10 radio hits with “See You Tonight” and “Feelin’ It,” but he also dealt with the bias that many talent-show competitors run up against in the music industry.

“I think we’ve had to work hard to establish ourselves away from ‘American Idol,’ to not just be the TV guy, but to be the country music artist that writes songs and tells stories and can sing songs,” said McCreery, who adds that he’s always been proud of his “Idol” beginning. He’s even returned to the new season of “Idol,” now on ABC, as a mentor.

But McCreery feared that after losing his record deal, he was losing the rights to the songs he had recorded while he was still signed. In particular, he wanted to get back a song called “Five More Minutes,” which he wrote after losing his grandfather in 2015.

McCreery spent a year negotiating the purchase of those songs, still out touring as an independent artist and even releasing a memoir.

“In Nashville, in particular, if you get dealt a fatal blow like what we got dealt in 2016, you don’t often get a second chance,” McCreery said. “So I knew if we were going to bet my career on anything, the resurgence of my career, I am going to bet on ‘Five More Minutes.’”

McCreery’s rebound play worked. He released “Five More Minutes” last year while still unsigned. The song became an emotional part of his live shows, earning standing ovations. He signed to independent Nashville label Triple Tigers Records, which pushed it to the top of Billboard’s country airplay chart, just in time for “Seasons Change,” released March 16.

It’s hard to imagine staging a career comeback

Scotty McCreery, who won “American Idol” in 2011, lost his record deal as bro-country dominated radio airplay. McCreery gambled on himself by buying back his songs, and his play paid off when “Five More Minutes” went to No. 1.

Courtesy of EB Media PR

After a lost record deal, Scotty McCreery goes indie and rebounds on a song

at 24, but McCreery considers his new record an introduction of sorts.

“Feels like I am starting fresh,” he said. “Feels like I am starting over, almost. Like this is the beginning of my career, almost. I feel like at 24, I know who I am a lot better than back in the day, and I know how to express that through my songs.”

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS



August Greene

August Greene (Amazon Music)

August Greene is a super-group in the truest sense of the word.

Oscar-winning rapper-actor Common, Grammy-winning pianist-producer Robert Glasper and masterful drummer-producer Karriem Riggins make up the collective, so it's no surprise that their self-titled debut is an enjoyable listen. (Last year, the trio won an Emmy for writing the song "Letter to the Free," from the Ava DuVernay documentary "13th").

The 11-track album is artisan-level hip-hop with a heart of jazz. See: the Samora Pinderhughes-assisted "Black Kennedy," where Glasper and Riggins build an easy vibe, upon which Common muses on life as a "black Kennedy, royalty with black identity." Then luxuriate in the largely lyric-less, but gorgeous, "Aya."

On "Let Go," Common's lyrics pour out like poetry: "Search for the inner Vatican in me / the temple, the body / I'm mental, I'm godly / somehow I made my mess-ups my hobby." Pinderhughes also appears on the track, and his vocals bring an important depth of emotion to songs throughout the album. The rising composer and pianist could easily be the fourth member of August Greene.

Common's dexterity is a beautiful thing, and so is the personal reflection he puts on display. Like on "Fly Away," where he nods to failed relationships with "an actress, a singer, and a tennis player," adding that he's wondered aloud to his aunt and a therapist if he's built for serious relationships.

He raps about a divided America on "The Time" and shares encouraging words "see through obstacles and be remarkable" — alongside Brandy on "Optimistic," which samples the 1991 hit from instrumental ensemble Sounds of Blackness.

"August Greene" is a thoughtful set from thoughtful dudes who continue their track record of being and working with music's socially and politically conscious — in this case, each other. Their music is the smooth kind — a mature effort that successfully steers clear of being a bore, perhaps the biggest pitfall threatening a crew of expert artists who are serious about craft, not flash.

— Melanie Sims
Associated Press

Courtesy of Red Light Management

The Decemberists get topical — sometimes tragically so — on their new album, "I'll Be Your Girl."



The Decemberists

I'll Be Your Girl (Capitol)

Frontman Colin Meloy wanted the Decemberists' new album to reflect the mood of the times, and sadly it's even more topical than intended. The Oregon band began performing the song "We All Die Young" onstage a year ago, and in the wake of recent headlines it will bring tears to our tear, recent events in Florida transforming the singalong into an anthem that pairs jarring words with defiantly exuberant music buoyed by a kids' chorus.

Such is the tone of "I'll Be Your Girl," which leavens Meloy's dark lyrics with humor and arrangements as colorful as the album cover. "Severed" threatens violence via '80s synth pop; "Once In My Life" is whiny but funny arena rock; and the strummy, drummy "Starwatcher" makes calamity sound palatable. There's also "Everything Is Awful," written in the wake of the 2016 election, which the band performs as a children's song for adults.

The Decemberists' albums always offer an opportunity for vocabulary expansion, and here Meloy puts petard, liminal and cussing to music. He's at his most literary on the fable "Rusalka, Rusalka/Wild Rushes," which reads like a Russian novel but is slightly shorter and delivers a valuable lesson on the hazards of temptation. It doesn't end well, which is no surprise. We all die young.

— Steven Wine
Associated Press

Judas Priest

Firepower (Epic Records)

If you think these heavy-metal dinosaurs have had it, you've got another thing coming. "Firepower," the fast-paced title track from the British steel merchants' latest album, is the best song Judas Priest has recorded in nearly three decades, kicking off a strong album that stands with any they've done before. Although not intended as a concept album, "Firepower" has a common thread running through much of it, songs from the viewpoint of soldiers or warriors in battle.

The album features a string of "Blacklist"-type villains, each given a sinister name that could have formed an episode of the James Spader TV show: "Neconrancer," "Flame Thrower" and "Spec-trer." Come to think of it, shave off singer Rob Halford's beard, plop a fedora atop his head and he'd look more than a little like a heavy metal Raymond Reddington.

Although not the vocal sire he used to be, Halford is still scary, intense and convincing in the lower registers.

"Firepower" might also be the last album that founding guitarist Glenn Tipton plays on, having retired last month from touring due to Parkinson's disease. But he's holding out the possibility of future contributions, and his solos here with guitar colleague Richie Faulkner are definitely Priest-worthy.

— Wayne Parry
Associated Press

Stone Temple Pilots

Stone Temple Pilots
(Rhino Records)

Everything from the 1990s seems to be making a comeback these days, from "The X-Files" and "Will & Grace" to the Spice Girls and velvet tracksuits. So is it time for Stone Temple Pilots?

Totally, as the kids said back then.

The four-piece band once closely associated with the grunge explosion of the early 1990s with such hits as "Creep" and "Plush" has returned with a new self-titled album and a new lead singer, Jeff Gutt.

Gutt, once a contestant on "The X Factor," has big shoes to fill, namely those of original frontman Scott Weiland, who was dismissed from the band amid his drug troubles, and Weiland's replacement, Linkin Park's Chester Bennington, who did a two-year stint with the band (both are now dead).

Stone Temple Pilots were often dissed by critics and fans of other bands as mere imitators of Pearl Jam and Nirvana. But they proved versatile and went on to explore other sonic terrain.

So credit guitarist Dean DeLeo, his bassist brother, Robert, and drummer Eric Kretz for keeping at it. There's plenty of bad '90s recycling, but having Stone Temple Pilots banging away in your earbuds isn't one of them.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

Snoop Dogg

Bible of Love (RCA Inspiration)

Snoop Dogg, one of rap's OGs, has a gospel double album out. Yes, that's right: The D-O-Double-G is doing G-O-D.

A humble, peace-loving, family-centered Snoop emerges on the 32-track double album "Bible of Love." He quotes from the Book of Isaiah — "No weapon formed against me shall prosper" — and has nice things to say about his devout grandmother.

"I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody about somebody who can save any body," he raps in one song. On another: "The devil will show up / But we're going to keep on doing God's work / Yes, sir / Rebuke the devil."

Snoop doesn't perform on every track, preferring to showcase a variety of outstanding performers in the genre, such as The Clark Sisters, John P. Kee and Kim Burrell.

Thanks to Mr. Dogg, non-gospel folk will now be exposed to powerhouses like Tye Tribbett, whose infectious "You" makes hearts race, and K-Ci, whose voice flutters like a butterfly on "No One Else."

When Snoop does drop in, his nasally, precise, laconic flow works in beautiful counterpoint to gospel stars such as Rance Allen (a terrifically funky "Blessing Me Again"), and B. Slade, who pops up all over the CDs and teams up with Snoop on the stunning, album-ending "Words Are Few."

Some big names have joined rap's dogfather on the project, including Faith Evans (on the show-stopping "Saved"), Charlie Wilson the foot-stomping "One More Day") and Patti LaBelle, with a spirited "When It's All Over."

Rising star Octavia Leonard, who sang the steamy "Kisses Down Below" and was last seen poolside with some bikini boudies knocking back expensive liquor on Snoop's video for "Go On," is a tad more conservative here with "In the Name of Jesus." Soapfap offers a view of what a rap-dance-gospel song can sound like on "Praise Him."

"Bible of Love" doesn't just showcase talented gospel artists. It shows off an elastic, big-text version of the musical genre that can include flavors of soul, blues and R&B. Adding rap makes perfect sense.

For that we should all praise the Dogg.

— Mark Kennedy
Associated Press

WEEKEND: BOOKS



LOVE LESSONS

'Bachelor' expert says watching show made her a smarter dater

BY LISA BONOS
The Washington Post

Before Arie Luyendyk Jr. became the most controversial Bachelor in history on March 5, I spoke to Amy Kaufman, a reporter at the Los Angeles Times, about her new book, "Bachelor Nation: Inside the World of America's Favorite Guilty Pleasure." Kaufman's cultural history of the ABC franchise contains juicy tidbits such as the top reason "Bachelor" applicants are turned down (herpes!) and how producers have reportedly tracked contestants' menstrual cycles to get more emotional interviews.

Kaufman has followed the show for years; she has even filled out "The Bachelor's" casting questionnaire and has spoken with former producers and contestants about making and being on the show — and to celebrities about why they tune in on Monday nights.

The Washington Post: How did you get into "The Bachelor?"
Kaufman: I got really into it around Jason Mesnick's season in 2009; he was the guy who picked the runner-up after he had proposed to someone else. It was so dramatic that I became obsessed with the show. I also started comparing my own love life to the show.

How did you compare your own love life to the show?

As I got older, I could see myself in those shoes more realistically. What would it be like if I was competing for the affection of this guy? And how do I want men to be treating me? Do the guys who I'm going out with do these kind of things to me? I had more of a point of reference as I got older and started dating more. So it made it even more enjoyable.

Has watching the show made you a smarter dater in any way?

In some ways I feel ridiculous when I talk about taking any lessons from "The Bachelor," because it's just such a terrible example of so many things. But one thing I do think it shows in a positive light is the way you could be treated by a guy, that you deserve to be with a guy who tells you how great you are, who is really communicative, who is complimentary, who is open with his feelings and tells you that he wants to be with you and is ready to settle down. When I'm on Bumble or dating on apps, there's so many possibilities that guys don't feel the pressure to express



"The Bachelor" ended on a surprise note this season with Arie Luyendyk Jr., above, leaving the woman he proposed to, Becca Kufrin, above left, for the runner-up, Lauren Burnham, above right.
ABC photos

themselves in that way. So that's frustrating.

On the show people say things like, "I'm falling for you" and "I can see a future for us." This is earlier than people would admit when they are dating in real life. But was watching "The Bachelor" helped you open up about your own feelings for someone, or lack thereof?

Because they do say it so early — and I know that they're being pressured to say it — it seems to have no allegiance to reality. But you can see it as an act of such intense bravery. One thing I do like seeing is that you watch these women or men drive away so devastated in the limo (after they've been eliminated). They're like "What's wrong with me? Oh my God, what did I do? I'm never going to find love." And then they turn up on a "Bachelor" spinoff, or you hear they're engaged six months later. We've all felt that awful and rejected, worrying that we're never going to find love.

I love the snippets that you have in the book from celebrities and other reality TV personalities about why they love the show. Comedian Nikki Glaser tells you: "I don't think it's a feminist show, but I do think feminists are into it because it's an interesting case study." I know so many strong, independent women — who identify as feminists — who love the show and disagree with so many things about it. Why do women love the show even when we kind of hate it?

This is partially why I wanted to write the book, because we all feel bad about watching it, but why do we feel bad? And should we feel bad? Everything we consume is seen as a reflection of who we are as a feminist. But that's a losing battle, because there are so many things we do in our everyday life that aren't quote-unquote "feminist" — the products we buy, the places we shop, you know. Men aren't bending over backward into pretzels to analyze why they're so into football and all the negative things that represents with violence or whatever. I've ultimately come to feel — that, first of all, feminists can be into love and romance; there's nothing wrong with



that. Second of all, the women who are going on the show are volunteering. Even though they're doing things that I don't see as particularly feminist, who am I to say that them deciding they want to prioritize love and maybe marriage in their life, over a career at a certain point, is bad?

I think a lot of us watching are maybe subconsciously yearning for that. But they are able to just say, "I really want a husband; I'm going to be open about that." It feels lame to be open about that nowadays. So maybe that's part of why we're thinking, "This feels bad to watch."

As you know, "The Bachelor" has been called out for its lack of diversity and there have been lawsuits claiming discrimination. We've seen one African-American lead — Rachel Lindsay as last season's Bachelorette — but that's about it. Do you think this show will get more diverse?

I'm pretty jaded and cynical about this, just knowing how slow they are to create change on the show. There were more women of color on Arie's season, but none have lasted that long. When people thought about Rachel's season that they were going to cast from her season and do a black Bachelor, I was like, yeah, guys — as if. That just seems like way too much progress for "The Bachelor." I would love it, but even thinking about the idea of a same-sex Bachelor or Bachelorette — how far off does that seem to you?

It seems really far off.

Even though it's happening all across America, I just don't know if a network television show is there yet.

In the back of the book, there's a list of the couples who've gotten married since "The Bachelor" and "The Bachelorette," and who's broken up. Obviously most do not make it. But it seems "The Bachelorette" has a slightly higher success rate. Why do you think that is?

From my observations, the women tend to ask questions about what they're looking for in a partner: What kind of father would you be? Who would be working? Where would we live? It's not just about the attraction, which sometimes the men get caught up in. That's why they end up with the villain or the woman who doesn't really fit into their life, but they're like "Ohh, I'm the Bachelor, and I'll never get to date this woman, so that's my pick!" I've seen that play out a few times.

So the women seem to be more practical?

Yeah, they can separate the overwhelming emotions from "Is this going to be a practical match in everyday life?"

Did you talk to any couples about the difference between when they're on the show and then their relationship after that? What makes things work or not?

Sean Lowe and Catherine Giudici were really interesting, because he did "Dancing with the Stars" right after his 2013 season of "The Bachelor," which so many of them do. And Catherine was like, "I was super-pissed. I'd just gone through this whole thing of trying to compete for him and finally it was our chance really for him to show his interest in me. And here he was, putting himself center stage again."

And then when they moved to Texas, she gave up her job at Amazon, she moved to a place where she knew no one. She got into a religion that she had not previously been into. And she talked about how that was a very hard adjustment at first, and she kept thinking: Just stick it out till you have kids; it'll get better; just one more year. And fortunately it did, but Sean said he was aware that he really had to put in some work and knew that she had made all these sacrifices for him.

It's hard. The power dynamic is kind of messed up after the show.

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle”: The film, just like the 1995 feature film “Jumanji,” is based on the 1981 book by Chris Van Allsburg, where it is win or game over for anyone who finds the mysterious board game. The big difference is, while in the 1995 version the board game came to life in the real world of the players, this version of Jumanji is a video game. Instead of wild animals in the living room, four teens are pulled inside the Jumanji game, which unfolds in a jungle world. This is a brilliant move by the gaggle of screenwriters as it allows director Jake Kasdan (“Freaks and Geeks”) to take the action to a jungle setting. He can load the movie with everything from a knot of snakes to a crash of rhinos. Don’t be surprised if you look for a reset button to start the film all over again.



SONY PICTURES/AP

From left, Kevin Hart, Dwayne Johnson, Karen Gillan and Jack Black star in “Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle,” now on DVD.

“Pitch Perfect 3”: “Pitch Perfect 3” is to movie comedy what fingernails on a chalkboard is to singing. And, if given the choice between seeing the movie and the fingernails, take the chalkboard option. It all starts so innocently. The Bellas have graduated from college and gone their separate ways. None have been able to find the same kind of success on their own that they had when they were an a cappella group. Because they are failing as individuals, the Bellas reunite to go on a USO tour. Gone in the obvious effort to squeeze a few more bucks out of the franchise is all the charm that made the first film so sweet and endearing and gave the sequel enough comedy harmony to be generally entertaining. The third movie is based on a painfully thin story, but the cast is so likable they could have raised the film to at least a tolerable level had they shown any signs of trying.

“Downsizing”: Director Alexander Payne got our votes when he offered a brilliantly satirical look at politics and popularity with his insightful high school-based comedy “Election.” He showed with “Sideways” that he could present a story as fun and dry as a prized red wine. He’s done neither with his latest offering, “Downsizing.” All the Oscar-winning filmmaker has shown with the production is how he came up short whether trying to make social commentary, dealing with political satire or attempting just to be funny. The film is a massively muddled mess of ideas that might have made more of an impact if Matt Damon’s performance wasn’t so painfully bland. “Downsizing” needed a smarter and tighter touch to make it a rich satire, but that didn’t happen.

Also new on DVD March 20
“Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In: The Complete Third Season”

“When Calls the Heart: The Heart of Homecoming”: The love story blooming in Hope Valley continues with the TV special. **“The Vanishing of Sidney Hall”:** The mysterious disappearance of an author is examined.

“Archer: Season Eight”: Set in 1940s Los Angeles, “Dreamland” lands Archer on a quest to find his partner’s killer.

“Ichi the Killer”: The film returns in a digitally restored special edition debuting on Blu-ray.

—Rick Bentley/Tribune News Service

Up next



AP

Big Boi of OutKast has landed a recurring role on “The Quad” and is in the process of filming his part for “SuperFly,” a remake of the 1970s cult classic. On “The Quad,” Big Boi plays the opinionated father of a heavily recruited high school football player. “The Quad” airs Thursdays on AFN-Pulse.

Rapper Big Boi takes aim at more TV, film projects

By JONATHAN LANDRUM JR.

Associated Press

Big Boi has never taken an acting class, but he’s still finding ways to land roles thanks to his upbringing.

“From uncles and aunts, hustlers, pimps and pushers, I’ve sucked up game since a tender age,” he said in a recent interview. “I tried to mimic and absorb how they were. I re-enacted a lot. But it really didn’t hit me until Ving Rhames told my moms, when I did ‘Idelwild,’ that I had acting chops and I should pursue it.”

Big Boi has starred in several films including the OutKast movie “Idelwild,” “ATL” and “Who’s Your Caddy,” and he’s looking to focus on more television and film projects. The Atlanta-based rapper has already landed a recurring role on BET’s “The Quad” and is in the process of filming his part for “Superfly,” a remake of the 1970s cult classic.

On “The Quad,” Big Boi plays the highly opinionated father of a new top recruit. The rapper said he can relate to his character since his son, Cross Patton, is a heavily recruited high school football player who was offered a scholarship at the University of Southern California.

Big Boi said he’s not as brash as his TV show character.

“I’m going to games, being that athlete/father/parent,” he said. “I just pulled from my everyday life. But I’m not obnoxious in real life. In this role, I had to actually bring out that obnoxiousness.”

Big Boi is best known as half of the groundbreaking

rap duo OutKast. Along with Andre 3000, the group won six Grammys and churned out six platinum-plus albums, including their “Speakerboxxx/The Love Below,” which sold more than 10 million copies.

As a solo artist, Big Boi has been able to hold his own. He’s released three studio albums including his critically acclaimed “Boombiverse,” which was released last year. He also collaborated with Danger Mouse and Run the Jewels on “Chase Me,” a Grammy-nominated song from the “Baby Driver” soundtrack.

For now, Big Boi said he’s recorded enough music for him to pursue acting. He’s kicking off his international rap tour this month, but he’s also making time for his other projects: The rapper is producing a couple of animated projects called “Hotlanta Waxx” and “Sherlock Holmes.”

With his busy schedule, Big Boi still runs his own dog breeding business called Unbelievable Bulldogs with clientele that includes Serena Williams, Taraji P. Henson, Usher and Rick Ross. He also has a separate company, Celebrity Trailers, which supplies luxury trailers to movie sets.

Through Celebrity Trailers, Big Boi rented a theater and transported about 30 hospice patients to watch “Black Panther” in suburban Atlanta last month.

Big Boi said he’s been able to juggle everything because he is “having fun.”

“That’s the whole key,” he said. “If it brings you joy, you’re going to be addicted to it. After you’ve sold all the records, won all the awards, it’s nothing to prove. It’s all about having fun and being on some Jedi rap. You’re a master, but always to student.”

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



Claustrophobia can turn MRI into frightening experience

By ERIC PIANIN ■ Special to The Washington Post

The thought of an MRI scanner, a coffinlike, hard-plastic tube with a ceiling just inches above the patient's eyes, has long filled Patrice Mitchell with dread.

The 64-year-old freelance editor and former journalist from Rochester, N.Y., has never been afraid of small spaces such as elevators. But she gets intensely claustrophobic when pulling anything — a sweater, for example — over her face and it gets caught. “If it gets stuck momentarily,” she says, “I immediately start to feel quite panicky and feel like I may have trouble breathing.”

Short of invasive surgery to probe for suspected cancerous tumors, brain aneurysms, abdominal infections and spinal problems, nothing is more effective at unmasking an ailment than cramming a patient into a doughnut-shaped tunnel armed with formidable magnetic imaging capability. But Mitchell — like many other Americans — has had to come up with coping mechanisms to endure surgery to address years of medical problems and sports-related injuries.

First, there were cervical spine and herniated disc symptoms that landed Mitchell in an MRI scanner in 1992. A decade later, she had scans for worsening headaches and to rule out metastatic breast cancer. Then she had to deal with a shoulder injury in 2013 from too much swimming. And in October, she was back in an MRI scanner for the 11th time — checking for leaks in a breast implant that had been inserted after cancer surgery.

Doctors and radiology specialists use plenty of tricks to try and ease patients' fears, and Mitchell has tried many of them. For her first two scans, her doctor prescribed anti-anxiety medication to calm her nerves. The drugs helped a lot, but Mitchell said she didn't want to become dependent on them to get through an MRI.

Once, a scheduler urged Mitchell to bring along a CD of her favorite music, and the staff arranged to pipe the music into the MRI tube to help her relax. Finally, Mitchell realized that if she simply kept her eyes closed throughout the session, she would be OK or even nod off.

“It helps overall when you have a nice, kind tech who fosters a soothing atmosphere,” she said. “Obviously, some are more caring than others, asking you whether you want a blanket or earplugs and keeping up a gentle patter of conversation as they are getting you ready.”

The magnetic resonance imaging machine is a superconducting magnet coiled in wire that bounces pulsing radio waves off patients and creates three-dimensional pictures of their anatomy on a computer. MRIs are especially good at creating images of

Patrice Mitchell

thin slices of the brain, heart, lung, spine and soft tissue; these images can be studied from different angles by radiologists.

Experts say MRIs provide a far more revealing image than an X-ray or CT scan, which use small levels of radiation. MRI scanners rely solely on magnetic imaging and do not emit radiation.

And while there are many “open” MRI scanners on the market that are far less confining and enable patients to look out through openings on the sides of the machines, experts say they aren't nearly as accurate as the “closed” equipment that so unsettled Mitchell.

Some industry advocates of “open” MRIs say that patients with claustrophobia are far better off using one of their products and get-

ting through the scan, even if the machines produce lesser-quality images. Yet generally speaking, closed MRIs are four or five times as powerful as open MRIs, when measured by their magnetic field strength.

About 36 million MRI procedures were performed in the United States in 2017, down 8 percent from the previous year, according to a study by IMV, a market research firm. As many as 5 percent of Americans may suffer from claustrophobia in some form, according to HealthResearchFunding.org, and up to 13 percent of patients who received an MRI reported having a panic attack.

Patients experiencing pain or discomfort might have trouble remaining still on a hard gurney for as long as an hour or more, according to physicians and radiologists. And some are rattled by the incessant banging sound created by the pulsating magnetic coils.

Sian L. Spurney, a Washington internist, said that over the years several of her patients have panicked after being eased into an MRI tunnel and tried to crawl out. “I think people who have that intense claustrophobic reaction feel like they are being buried alive,” she said.

“It's hard to predict who is going to have a bad experience,” Spurney said. “It's embarrassing for patients, and it often jams up the schedule for other MRIs.”

Simply worrying about the MRI in advance of the procedure can be enough to set a patient's nerves on edge. And fear of what serious medical problems the imaging might reveal significantly adds to the anxiety.

“There's a percentage of the population that flat-out will not be able to get an MRI, just because the claustrophobia is so intense,” said Mike Skok, a senior executive at Provident Medical Equipment, an Ohio company that specializes in new and refurbished MRI equipment. “So those folks just can't get scanned.”

Don't neglect thyroid check

By WINA STURGEON
Adventure Sports Weekly

Have you been feeling dull and out of sorts lately, with none of your regular energy? Have you been putting on pounds, struggling to fasten buttons or zip up zippers, even though you're not eating any more than you normally do? Do you find yourself often irritable and unable to concentrate? Are your fingernails growing slower?

If so, you may have hypothyroidism, a lower-than-normal amount of the hormones T3 and T4, produced by the thyroid gland. The thyroid is one of the most important glands in the body. Its hormones affect every organ in human bodies. These hormones regulate metabolism, as well as the energy of nearly every cell in our bodies.

If “normal” defines what is most common, then hypothyroidism is normal. According to webmd.com, “Synthroid (levothyroxine), which treats hypothyroidism, or underactive thyroid disease, has been the top-prescribed medicine for several years.”

The thyroid can also produce too much of its hormones, causing hyperthyroidism, which produces the exact opposite symptoms as the hypo version. Too much thyroid hormone causes sudden weight loss, rapid heartbeat, anxiety and irritability. But the hypo version, or an underactive gland, is much more common.

You can actually feel your thyroid gland. It's a two-lobed gland, with one lobe lying on each side of the lower windpipe. It's shaped a little like a butterfly. But feeling it won't let you know whether it is producing too little of the hormones your body needs. For that, you'll need a blood test. When your blood is checked for T3 and T4 hormone, your physician will be able to tell whether you are low in thyroxine.

The problem is that many folks don't know how involved their thyroid gland is in their well-being, so they might struggle along for years with lowered ability to concentrate, unable to sleep well, and feelings of extreme tiredness even if they do get eight hours or more of sleep.

More women than men suffer from low thyroid. It often hits women in their mid-to-late 30s. Often the women don't recognize their fatigue, or suddenly brittle, dry hair and nails, frequent mood changes, weight gain and other issues as medical symptoms. Because hypothyroidism can come on slowly without making an instant change, many physicians suggest that everyone — both men and women — have a blood test done for their thyroid hormone levels every few years.

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Aging in place

New tech helps senior citizens feel safe, connected

By GABI REDFORD
Kaiser Health News

Nancy Delano, 80, of Denver has no plans to slow down anytime soon. She still drives to movies, plays and dinners out with friends. A retired elder care nurse who lives alone, she also knows that “when you reach a certain age, emergencies can happen fast.” So, when her son, Tom Rogers, talked to her about installing a remote monitoring system, she didn’t hesitate. With motion sensors placed throughout the home, Rogers can see if his mom is moving around, if she’s sleeping (or not), if she forgot to lock the door and, based on a sophisticated algorithm that detects behavioral patterns, whether her activity level or eating habits have changed significantly, for instance.

“It gives both of us peace of mind, particularly as she ages and wants to live at home,” said Rogers, who lives near Washington, D.C., hundreds of miles away from her. At \$45-\$60 a month (plus an upfront fee of \$100 to \$200), Alarm.com’s Wellness system is markedly less expensive than options such as hiring a home health aide to check on her or moving her into a retirement community. The average cost of nursing home care exceeds \$85,000 a year, while assisted living and in-home care tops \$45,000 annually, according to a 2017 Genworth Financial report.

The exorbitant costs of nursing home and assisted living care are driving sales — and innovation — in the technology market, said Dr. Eric Topol, director of the Scripps Translational Science Institute and author of “The Creative Destruction of Medicine: How the Digital Revolution Will Create Better Health Care.”

For many, the technology offers not just the tools they need to continue to live at home, but newfound confidence and connectedness with faraway family and friends.

Topol calls it “monitored independence,” and it is changing how older generations age in America. “People want to be autonomous, irrespective of age,” he said.

That was certainly the case for Carol Smith, 83, who lives in the Carlsbad by the Sea retirement community in Carlsbad, Calif., with her husband, Ray, 84. “I’m in a wheelchair, so I depend on my husband a lot,” she said.

The Smiths were introduced to Carol Smith, 83, who lives in the Carlsbad by the Sea retirement community in Carlsbad, Calif., with her husband, Ray, 84. “I’m in a wheelchair, so I depend on my husband a lot,” she said.

“It gives her a great deal of independence,” Ray said. “If for some reason I have to be away, she’s able



COURTESY OF THE SMITH FAMILY/TNS

Carol Smith can control the lights and the thermostat with Amazon Echo. She can ask Alexa to remind her to take medications, or even to call for help. “It gives her a great deal of independence,” said her husband, Ray. “If for some reason I have to be away, she’s able to function on her own.”

to function on her own. It’s keeping her safe, but closely related to that, it’s allowing her to be independently safe.”

Voice-assistive technologies like the Amazon Echo, Google Home and HomePod are likely to play a bigger role in helping seniors age in place, especially when paired with apps geared specifically for senior living, predicts Majd Alwan, executive director of the LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies (CAST). AskMarvec, for instance, integrates with Amazon Echo via an online portal to allow seniors to immediately connect with family members for a quick check-

ago after contracting viral myocarditis. To keep it all straight, he uses Medisafe, an app that reminds him when it’s time to take his next dose, whether to take the pills with water or food, and what side effects might be attributable to the medication.

“I designated my wife, Linda, as a ‘MedFriend,’ which meant she got an alert when I didn’t take my medication,” he said. (The app is free; the Premium version, with additional reminder and Medfriend features, costs \$4.99 a month.)

Indeed, the ability to designate a loved one as a second set of eyes and ears can be comforting rather than intrusive. And yet, there’s a fine line

between technology that allows older adults to live independently, and technology that reinforces stereotypical images of aging as a slow decline toward death.

Until recently, Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS) — made famous by the “Help, I’ve fallen and I can’t get up” TV ads — was the only reliable technology to help older adults who had fallen, says David Lindeman, director of the Center for Technology and Aging at the University of California-Berkeley.

By the end of March, MedHab will begin shipping MyNotifi, a medical alert wristband designed to detect falls and send an alert to a family member or friend. (The device is available for preorder at \$299.)

Similar fall detection technologies in various stages of testing include SafetyYou, which uses wall-mounted cameras and software algorithms to detect falls, and UnaiWear’s Kanega watch, which combines fall detection, voice-assisted emergency aid and medication reminders.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



A lousy start to spring break

After months of relentless snow in Germany, we were headed to Spain for spring break. We’d splurged on a rental house along Costa Brava with breathtaking views. What could go wrong?

We showed up at the Stuttgart Airport right on time. When called to board, we cattle-prodded our three kids through the tight lineup. Excited to escape the frigid confines of Patch Barracks, I envisioned pitchers of sangria, casual tapas dinners and lounging seaside without a care.

Then, I saw something moving on Anna’s forehead. A tiny bug crawled along her hairline. Horrified, I instinctively grabbed her, pinching the bug between my thumb and finger. The girls had been complaining of itchy scalps, but I’d thought it was dry skin.

“Boarding passes, please,” the Lufthansa rep demanded. Francis produced our tickets and herded us through the gate, wondering why I looked like I’d seen a ghost.

With the unidentified beast clamped between my thumb and forefinger, I threw myself into our row of airplane seats, peered down at my pinched fingers, and slowly released my grasp.

The speck was motionless. Was it a harmless flake of skin? A fragment of leaf? A sesame seed from the morning bagels? Had I panicked for no reason? Silly me!

Just then, I squealed as I spied six wriggling legs.

Francis was irritable — his usual mood during family travel — so he was annoyed by me waving frantically across the aisle. He leaned over and barked, “What is it, for criminy’s sake?”

“Lice!” I whisper-screamed, pointing at Anna’s head. No one in our family had ever had lice, so the idea of our fifth-grade daughter being infested with parasites was terrifying. I spent the rest of our flight picking at Anna like a crazed chimpanzee. Of course, Lilly had lice too.

Debarbing the plane, I peered into Francis’ eyes and enunciated desperately, “FIND A PHARMACY. NOW.”

Francis sputtered through the streets of Girona in our rental car, searching for a green neon cross, the universal sign of European pharmacies. “There’s one,” I exclaimed, but there was nowhere to park on the busy street.

“Jump out!” I’ll circle back and pick you up!” Francis yelled, and I leapt toward the green cross. I flung the door open and lunged breathlessly into the tiny establishment. Three startled Spaniards stared back at me.

In Europe, patrons ask the pharmacist for most products, which are located behind the counter. (A year later, this custom proved particularly embarrassing when I was constipated during a trip to Venice.) “My daughters have lice!” I blurted to the pharmacist. His puzzled look reminded me that I was in Spain.

Like a bad mime, I pantomimed, supplementing with the few Spanish words I remembered from sixth grade. “My ninos!” I pleaded. I scratched my head violently, pinched an invisible bug and grimaced. “Un piquito,” I growled, then hopped around, gnashing my teeth and clawing at the air like a giant, marauding louse.

Swallowing a giggle, the pharmacist said, “Si senora, un momento, por favor.”

An hour later, Anna and Lilly were in the rental house bathtub, their heads in frothy turbans of shampoo and shower caps from the lice kits I’d been sold.

Despite our initial panic, we didn’t let those lousy lice ruin our spring break.

To my relief, I learned that an estimated 6 to 12 million infestations occur each year in the U.S. among children 3 to 11 years of age. Head lice are most commonly spread through direct hair-to-hair contact. Infestation has nothing to do with cleanliness or environment. Although it might take several treatments and multiple sessions of combing and nit-picking, lice can be eradicated in a couple of weeks.

That week in Spain, we added nit-picking to our daily repertoire of sangria, tapas and breathtaking views. Spring break wasn’t as carefree as I’d envisioned, but sometimes, you have to take the good with the bugs.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari’s columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

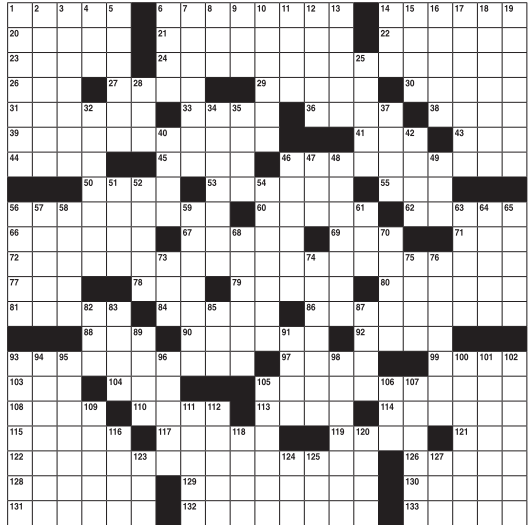
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

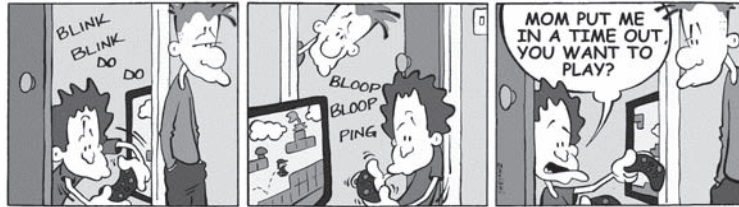
TAKING YOUR Q

BY DANIEL RAYMON / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

- ACROSS**
- 1 Big name in computer networking
- 6 Progressive rival
- 14 Arias
- 20 North-Dakota-to-Michigan hwy.
- 21 Members of an Oklahoma tribe
- 22 Addressee of a waiter in a French restaurant
- 23 Exposés
- 24 Interrogate a founding father?
- 26 Uganda's Amin
- 27 One getting shoed
- 29 Bone: Prefix
- 30 Was wide open
- 31 Like the first man-made space satellite
- 33 What the earth and many political analysts do
- 36 They're added on bus. Lines
- 38 "Sticks and Bones" playwright David
- 39 "There are no atheists in foxholes?"
- 41 Word aptly found in "controlled" and "marshaled"
- 43 Taken in the game Life
- 44 Was a rat
- 45 Engaged in
- 46 Tremors?
- 50 Hershey brand
- 53 "From your lips to God's ears"
- 55 Frequent subject of paintings by Winslow Homer
- 56 Largest lake in South America
- 60 Charles de Gaulle's birthplace
- 62 Animal with a trunk
- 66 Interest's opposite
- 67 Kingdom in Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings"
- 69 Email address ending
- 71 Suffix in Sussex
- 72 Comment by a Brit down to his last coin?
- 77 "We ____ the Champions"
- 78 Gardner of "Mogambo"
- 79 Joe of "Home Alone"
- 80 True
- 81 Instruments played on Mount Olympus
- 84 Expert of resignation
- 88 Greek cross
- 90 "As you wish, Captain!"
- 92 Huck Finn possessive
- 93 One knocking out an opponent in the first round?
- 97 Russian council
- 99 Spanish snack
- 101 One of 100; Abbr.
- 105 Monarch who's fine and dandy?
- 108 Cries of surprise
- 110 Teeming
- 113 Veg out
- 114 Irish form of "Edmund"
- 115 Heinrich ____ "Die Lorelei" poet
- 117 N.W.A.'s "Straight ____ Compton"
- 119 More than a millennium
- 121 Indochinese language
- 122 Have a little ice cream delivered?
- 126 Like rope
- 128 Supermodel Bündchen
- 129 Birdie
- 130 With celerity
- 131 Kept others awake, maybe
- 132 Tip of a missile
- 133 More sound
- DOWN**
- 1 Picasso and Braque, for two
- 2 Dancer Duncan
- 3 Gone to great lengths
- 4 Muddling mark
- 5 Like freemason work, often
- 6 Atty's: titles
- 7 Stops yapping
- 8 Sheikh's land, for short
- 9 Presidential ints.
- 10 "Who's interested?"
- 11 Update, say
- 12 Terminate
- 13 English county
- 14 Response to an oversharer
- 15 Suspend
- 16 Catherine's husband in "Wuthering Heights"
- 17 Bishop of the Lord group, once
- 18 Ones moving with the aid of pseudopods
- 19 Seamstresses, at times
- 25 With vehemence
- 28 Ending of the Bible
- 32 Unappreciative sort
- 34 Metallic
- 35 S-shaped piece
- 36 "____ing America" (start of a Langston Hughes poem)
- 37 "Look Who's Talking Too" and "2 Fast 2 Furious"; Abbr.
- 40 Basic French question
- 42 Number for two
- 46 Sentient ones
- 47 Words that can't be heard, for short
- 48 Western wear
- 49 Strong bond?
- 51 Publisher Arthur ____ Sulzberger
- 52 Song woman who's asked "Darlin', won't you ease my worried mind?"
- 54 Subject of the mnemonic "Men Very Easily Make Jugs Serve Useful Needs"
- 56 Taj ____
- 57 Mimi's activity
- 58 Not so common
- 59 Medieval weapon
- 61 Suffix with trick
- 63 Pope who excommunicated Elizabeth I
- 64 Jude's question to the Lord
- 65 Change the color of again
- 68 More trendy
- 70 TV's "Growing Up ____"
- 73 Some gametes
- 74 Accumulation
- 75 Things with colons inside them
- 76 Kind of leap
- 82 Abbr. that's sometimes doubled or tripled
- 83 Nordstrom rival
- 85 Term for a hole in Swiss cheese
- 87 1979 exile
- 89 It'll take you for a ride
- 91 Prefix with -graphic
- 93 Hard-shell claims
- 94 Mark the beginning of
- 95 Unsatisfying answer to "Why?"
- 96 Bagel variety
- 98 British sports automobile
- 100 Kind of harp
- 101 Atonement
- 102 Nuisance
- 105 Trophy alternative
- 106 Navy petty officer: Abbr.
- 107 The so-called "Flying Kangaroo"
- 109 Curl one's lip
- 111 Informal sleep option
- 112 People: Prefix
- 116 Man's name that comes from an English noble
- 118 Some summer wear
- 120 Ser : Spanish
- 122 : French
- 123 Iraq War danger, for short
- 124 A.C.C. powerhouse
- 125 Rumpus
- 127 F.R. job-creating prog.

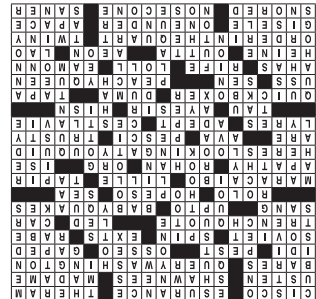


GUNSTON STREET



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FACES

By RICK BENTLEY
Tribune News Service

Matt Danner has been working in animation for more than two decades, starting while he was still in high school. Over the years, he's worked on a variety of programs, including "Gravity Falls," "The Looney Tunes Show," and "WWE Slam City." None of those projects has excited him as much as being named the supervising director for the new version of "Muppet Babies."

His excitement isn't just being in charge of a franchise he's loved since he was a youngster. It's even more of a thrill because Danner will supply the voice of the young Kermit. His passion is so real for the group, in his office is the plush Kermit the Frog toy his parents would put in his crib with him.

"If I go back in time to the first TV friend I had, it would be Kermit because I grew up watching 'Sesame Street.' My first memories of comedy and character and friendship were with Kermit the Frog," Danner says. "This is a long-time commitment to the franchise."

As the supervising director of the new "Muppet Babies," Danner has taken on a huge responsibility. He's now riding herd over part of an entertainment franchise that dates back more than 60 years and has been presented through multiple television shows, movies and stage productions. Instead of thinking about all of the mistakes he could make, Danner is just concentrating on making the best product with the characters he's loved his entire life.

"I think more about whatever we mine from the project comes from what made it pure in the first place," Danner says. "There was no part of any of us when we were developing this show that said 'Oh, I want to do my own version of 'Muppet Babies.' It was more what we liked it in the first place, where did it come from and then playing to those strengths."

The biggest difference between this version and the original one in 1984 is the animation world has advanced and now the characters come closer to looking like puppets. To get the design right, the team went back to the 1984 film "The Muppets Take Manhattan," where the idea was first shown. It was a dream sequence in which Miss Piggy imagined what it would be like if she and Kermit had grown up together.

The new series ages the babies to toddlers for Kermit the Frog, Piggy, Fozzie Bear, Gonzo and Animal. Joining the group is Summer Penguin, a new character designed to add a female perspective and a way of introducing young viewers to



DISNEY JUNIOR

The reimaged "Muppet Babies" television series chronicles the playroom antics of Kermit the Frog, Piggy, Fozzie Bear, Gonzo and Animal, as well as a new character, Summer Penguin, second from left.

VOICE REBOOT

Matt Danner happy to speak for new version of 'Muppet Babies'

the group. Along with Danner as the voice of Kermit, the cast includes Jenny Slate as Miss Nanny, Melanie Harrison as Piggy, Dee Bradley Baker as Animal, Ben Diskin as Gonzo, Eric Bauza as Fozzie and Jessica DiCicco as Summer.

The gang will hang out in the playroom of an urban brownstone with an expansive backyard. This will give them everything they need to go on their fantastical adventures. The backyard is home to Kermit's bouncy pond, Piggy's dressing room, Summer's art table, Gonzo's chicken coop, Fozzie's stage and a communal treeshouse.

In every episode the Muppet Babies use their imaginations to go into a fantasy sequence, each with a distinct style.

Each episode will feature a theme centered on one of the characters. The story will use the zany comedy the Muppet Babies are known for to introduce young viewers to the problem-solving power of imagination.

Although Danner is excited he's the voice of Kermit, the idea of him handling the vocals was not the original plan. Danner has done an occasional cartoon voice, but the majority of the work would go to more seasoned voice actors. What he's done over the

years, as in the case of "Muppet Babies," has been to provide the initial recordings used to begin the animation process.

"I assumed that we were going to hire real actors," Danner says with a laugh. "But, then the people at Muppet Studios heard it and decided what I had done was fine so we just went with it. Once the show got picked up we had a huge casting call for the voices and I was encouraged by my team to try out."

"I decided to do it and I made every cut. They told me that for some reason my voice is very close to Jim Henson's."

Metz writes about struggles, triumph in new memoir

From wire reports

"This Is Us" star Chrissy Metz writes about her early struggles with weight and poverty and her later success as an actress in her new memoir.

In an excerpt from the book "This Is Me," appearing in the April 2 "People" magazine, the 37-year-old describes growing up poor and overweight in Florida.

She writes about her first kiss, but says the boy would not acknowledge it in public. She moved to Los Angeles in 2003 to pursue her dream of becoming an actress.

She says her role as Kate in the NBC drama has changed her life and she is "embracing the idea that people could be inspired by me."

Court sides with Gaye family

A federal appeals court on Wednesday upheld a copyright infringement verdict against Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams over the 2013 hit "Blurred Lines."

In a split decision from a three-judge

panel, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals awarded \$5.3 million to the family of Marvin Gaye, who said "Blurred Lines" is illegally copied from the late soul singer's "Got to Give It Up."

Two judges from the panel of three rejected the defense's request to overturn a jury verdict or order a new trial, saying that Gaye's copyright on the song is entitled to broad protection. They accepted a trial court judge's instructing the jury to decide based only on the sheet music to the songs, and not the recordings.

Other news

■ "13 Reasons Why" will return for a second season with new storylines, new characters and a new warning that the series — which depicts controversial topics like suicide and rape — might not be for everyone. Netflix announced Wednesday that its popular teen drama will now feature a short video ahead of the first episode of each season starring cast members breaking character to offer viewers support.

■ The Weekend, Bruno Mars, Jack White and Arctic Monkeys will headline this year's Lollapalooza music festival in Chicago. Travis Scott, The National, Vampire Weekend and Odesza also were among the performers announced Wednesday on Lollapalooza's website. The event is Aug. 2-5 in Chicago's lakefront Grant Park.

■ "NSYNC is finally reuniting — but not for new music or a tour. The boy band will earn a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on April 30. Justin Timberlake, JC Chasez, Lance Bass, Joey Fatone and Chris Kirkpatrick will attend the event.

■ Former "Wonder Years" star Fred Savage is facing claims he struck a female crew member during a profanity-laced meltdown on the TV comedy "The Grinder" — allegations he denies. In a lawsuit filed Wednesday in Los Angeles, wardrobe staffer Youngjoo Hwang alleges Savage, 41, hit her repeatedly when she tried to remove dandruff from his clothing. Savage vehemently denied the allegations in a lengthy statement.

■ Sammy Williams, 69, who won a Tony Award in the original Broadway production



AP

"This Is Us" actress Chrissy Metz is releasing her memoir, "This Is Me," on March 27.

of "A Chorus Line," died of cancer March 17 in Los Angeles, family spokeswoman and friend Brandee Barnaby says.

■ A longtime Boston television personality and entertainer known for playing Bozo the Clown has died at age 89. WCVB-TV reports Frank Avruch died Tuesday at his Boston home from heart disease. Avruch played Bozo the Clown from 1959 to 1970, a clown character particularly popular in the U.S. in the 1960s because of widespread franchising in television.

STARS AND STRIPES

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OPINION

We fear most the tech we can't control

By TYLER COWEN

Bloomberg View

The world has now seen its first death by driverless car in Tempe, Ariz., as a pedestrian was struck down by an Uber vehicle. This is a big news story, even though about 40,000 Americans die from motor vehicle accidents each year. We're learning that this technological age, which seemed to start with the pretty innocuous act of emailing, has evolved to play into our more primal fears about feeling out of control.

Stories about how individual people die, or nearly die, are captivating. If a child is trapped down a well, the world will watch for days and spend whatever is needed to pull off a rescue. This is because we elevate highly visible deaths over harder-to-see deaths. Notice the news coverage of ISIS beheadings of Western journalists, victims of mass school shootings and the recent attempted assassination of a Russian former double agent in the U.K. We should not, however, see our hurried responses as overreacting. Too often, the natural human tendency is not to respond decisively to a tragedy at all. If the drama of these deaths mobilizes us, that may be needed to help fix the underlying problem.

The rush to respond is more problematic, however, when the visible deaths sprang from a new technology. The first American citizen to be assassinated by a mini-drone on U.S. soil will be a big, big story. There is already a virtual fictional video about this possibility. We will indeed be mobilized to action, but we may respond by shunning or overregulating drones, even if such action is unlikely to limit the terrorist attacks.

Part of the problem with drones is that we don't like feeling out of control, and the newness of the technology gives the story extra legs. We think we can protect our lives against many kinds of risks, perhaps irrationally to some extent, but how do you protect against being assassinated by a small, poison-equipped drone? Even if there are useful steps you can take, they are not obvious to us today. This seems like a scary possibility attached to a dystopian



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD/AP

Investigators on Tuesday examine a driverless Uber SUV that fatally struck a woman in Tempe, Ariz., on Sunday.

future, even if the number of deaths by drone assassination never approaches that of suicide from handguns.

Like drones, driverless cars possess some features of an especially potent scary story. They are a new and exciting technology, and so stories about them get a lot of play. We don't actually know how safe they are, and that uncertainty will spook people above and beyond whatever is the particular level of risk. Most of all, driverless cars by definition involve humans not flying in direct control. It resembles how a lot of people feel in greater danger when flying than driving a car, even though flying is usually safer. Driverless cars raise a lot of questions about driver control. Should you be allowed to sleep in the back-

seat? Or must you stay by the wheel? That focuses our minds and feelings on the issue of control all the more.

The authorities have issued a preliminary judgment that the accident in Tempe was the result of an errant pedestrian, and that it had nothing to do with the car in question being driverless. Still, if you think that Americans process information about risk rationally, I would advise you to consider attitudes toward vaccines. Or consider how many people develop diabetes, partially through bad lifestyle decisions, and then they don't treat the condition properly, even with their lives on the line.

As for the accident, the result so far is that Uber has suspended all tests of its autonomous vehicles on American roads. We all know that another driverless car accident next week, no matter what the result, could create a media frenzy and a regulatory backlash, for better or for worse.

The recent brouhaha over Facebook and Cambridge Analytica reflects similar issues. Could most Americans clearly and correctly articulate exactly what went wrong with that social media company, but people do know that when it comes to social networks, their personal data and algorithms, they don't exactly feel in control. The murkiness of the events and legal obligations is in fact part of the problem.

When I see a new story or criticism about one of our robots putting us all out of work, or a new story about how the tech companies poll as being popular (they do). I instead wonder whether voters feel in control in a world with North Korean nuclear weapons, an erratic American president and algorithms everywhere. They don't. Haven't you wondered why all about robots putting us all out of work are so popular during a time of full employment?

We are about to enter a new meta-narrative for American society, which I call "re-establishing the feeling of control." Unfortunately, when you pursue the feeling rather than the actual control, you often end up with neither.

Tyler Cowen is a Bloomberg View columnist. He is a professor of economics at George Mason University.

Trump viewed as guilty even if proved innocent

By JAY AMBROSE

Tribune News Service

It's insane, it's egregious and it's another spurious step in justifying the impeachment of President Donald Trump, all this talk about how he forced the firing of former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe. But wait. I see a cure. Those who come to such conclusions should take a beginners' course in comprehending political events.

In the classroom, if they would stay quiet, a teacher could say they should put facts before venomous prejudices, and here they are:

The Justice Department's independent inspector general looked into possible missteps by McCabe when the FBI was inquiring into Hillary Clinton's emails and family foundation. He then sent a report to the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility, a group made up of career officials whose job is to maintain FBI integrity through discipline if necessary.

After studying the evidence, the office said Mr. Hinder would like to be a reporter and also, under oath, was not candid with investigators. The office urged Attorney General Jeff Sessions to fire him and he did his duty. The teacher could note that it was then that the students had screamed about America tumbling down because Donald the Hinder was back again. To see if they were at last catching on, a test

could be administered with the following questions.

Was the inspector general — appointed by President Barack Obama — acting on his own or in accordance with Trump tweets? Is he a liar and a fraud? Did the Office of Professional Responsibility become irresponsible, failing to study the report or make an honest, informed judgment? Do these officials themselves lack integrity? Would Sessions have been doing his job if he had ignored the report?

The answers to all of this should be obvious to anyone with a reasonably balanced mind — even though it is also obvious that Trump is an uncouth Twitter fanatic. He has gone after McCabe incessantly and happily did it again after the firing, also slamming former FBI Director James Comey. He shouldn't have, but maybe McCabe should not have then defended himself the way he did.

McCabe argued that there was nothing wrong with his overseeing FBI discussions with the press and that Comey, then his boss, knew about it. The thing is, Comey never told the inspector general about the hearing that he never authorized anything like that and this could make it look like he was perjuring himself. Comey may already be in trouble because of leaking what could have been classified information concerning discussions with Trump and Clinton the way in which he intervened in the Clinton email scandal.

McCabe, meanwhile, is said to have had a conflict of interest thanks to his wife being a politician who got donations from a Clinton ally. There are now news accounts saying he may have strangely postponed letting Comey know about the FBI link into Clinton emails found on the laptop of Anthony Weiner, the husband of Clinton's top aide, Huma Abedin.

We also know that the Clinton campaign paid for a former British spy to get unverifiable information about Russian contacts and that it was used by the FBI in helping to get legal permission to spy on someone who had been a Trump campaign assistant. At the same time, there has been an unprecedented barrage of leaks of classified information from intelligence agencies about supposed Trump transactions.

Right now, so very much is up in the air, and the last thing Trump should do is interfere in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of his possibly doing what the Clinton campaign did: collude with the Russians. Whatever Mueller finds or does not find, we need to know about it, and we also need to know a lot more about all of these people, including government actors, who seem bent on destroying our democratic institutions in order to keep Trump from doing it.

That's what a good teacher would say, and we should all listen.

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Big step backward on trophies
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

President Donald Trump had it right in November when he surprised supporters and critics alike by calling elephant hunting a "horror show." He personally stopped the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from lifting a ban that forbids importing body parts of elephants shot for sport in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

But the turnaround came on March 1. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, an avid hunter, issued a letter allowing the importation of elephant trophies to be decided on a "case-by-case basis." Lifting the ban will send the wrong signal that the United States approves of elephant slaughter and encourages illicit poaching for elephant ivory, which has led to devastating losses of the world's largest land mammal.

When Trump left the ban in place, he was praised across the political spectrum and particularly from conservationists who did not have much reason to expect his support. At the time, Trump's aides said the motive was no more complicated than that the president likes elephants.

Now that he has quietly altered the rules change, should the public think that Trump no longer loves the lumbering pachyderms? Or could his silence be related to a federal lawsuit the National Rifle Association and the hunting advocacy group Safari Club International won in December?

Their suit said the Obama administration had not properly launched the lengthy rule-making process involving public comment when creating the regulation that banned the trophies. Bringing elephant body parts into the United States has nothing to do with Second Amendment rights, but since it takes a gun to kill an elephant, the NRA barged in.

The Fish and Wildlife Service directly cited the court ruling in its letter lifting the ban, saying it was withdrawing several Endangered Species Act findings dating to 1995, including protections for South African lions and bontobeks.

That makes the horror show even worse. The African elephant population has diminished from 10 million in the early 1900s to a few hundred thousand now.

When Trump stood against lifting the ban in November, he tweeted that it would be very difficult for anyone to change his mind "that this horror show in any way have conservation of elephants or any other animal."

Trump owes the nation an explanation for his abrupt about-face.

Preserve the sharing machines
The Washington Post

Before rushing to judgment on the latest surge of disclosures about Facebook data and how it was used by Cambridge Analytica, everyone should take a deep breath. The very essence of Facebook and social media is to share information, to entertain and enlighten users, and to sustain a business model that has transformed marketing, advertising and news. Those who enter the ecosystem of social networking should not suddenly be shocked that information is being shared. What they should want is transparency and a robust digital world that does not become a hidden surveillance state.

A key question is: Who owns personal information? Facebook allowed an outside researcher in 2013 to develop an app on the platform that paid users a small sum to answer questions and download the app,



which then harvested private information from their profiles and those of their friends. Facebook permitted such data mining at the time. It is doubtful many users knew what was happening or read the fine print. The researcher, Aleksandr Kogan of Cambridge University, then provided the data — on some 50 million people — to Cambridge Analytica, a private firm founded by Steve Bannon, the conservative political operative; and Robert Mercer, the wealthy financier; and another firm.

This transfer of data to a third party broke Facebook's internal policies. In 2015, Facebook found out, removed the app and demanded the data be destroyed. Apparently, it was not, and may have been exploited to help Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, including tests of anti-establishment messages such as "deep state" and "drain the swamp." The transfer may also have violated Facebook assurances about user privacy to the Federal Trade Commission in a 2011 settlement.

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg responded Wednesday with an admission of a "breach of trust" and a promise of tighter controls. Further examination of how this happened should come from Facebook, Congress and the FTC. However, users must be realistic. Social media platforms are in business to share. Anyone who spends time browsing online will soon discover hidden sinews that connect each click. Consumers benefit when they get recommendations for a product "we thought you might like." But at the same time, one wants a nightmarish surveillance state like that under construction in China, where every citizen is being assigned a "social credit" score. The trick is to find the right path.

Facebook and others are under enormous pressure to behave more as publishers responsible for their content than as neutral platforms. They should not resist. Facebook faces a related set of questions about manipulation of the platform in the 2016 campaign. It is plausible that some were moved to vote for Trump by postings or ads based on the data Kogan gave Cambridge Analytica. That is a story that needs to be thoroughly aired, while bearing in mind that Democrats Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton also harnessed big data in their campaigns.

All of this should be pursued in the spirit of perfecting rules of the road to keep social networks free and open. In the end, they should remain what they are, great sharing machines.

Limit, protect pets on planes
Boston Herald

The tragic and unnecessary demise of Kokito the French bulldog earlier this month touched Americans in their collective nerve center. We are a country that loves dogs, and word that a beloved canine died after being forced into an overhead

bin on a United Airlines flight horrified us.

Indeed, Kokito was wronged and United Airlines has a problem when it comes to canines surviving flights — they lost 18 dogs last year — but the real issue is why so many dogs are on airplanes.

The simple answer is that people are certifying their animals as service dogs, emotional support dogs and therapy dogs with a few clicks of the mouse and a modest onetime fee on a number of websites, and insisting that the airlines won't scrutinize their legitimacy for fear of a lawsuit. It's working.

Delta Airlines estimates there are 700 support animals on flights every day. That's almost 250,000 annually. The majority of these are dogs like Kokito, but according to the Delta website, "Customers have attempted to fly with comfort turkeys, gliding possums known as sugar gliders, snakes, spiders and more."

Sensible people can agree that we do not need spiders and turkeys on planes, but dog lovers — the major offenders — need to make some sacrifices. It's time — with the exception of those assisting people with medical needs — to get the pooches off the planes.

Focus on helping opioid addicts
The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette

The Trump administration's latest proposal for tackling the opioid crisis is not devoid of good ideas. It's certainly got more meat on its bones than the president's declaration of the crisis as a public health emergency last fall.

There was talk, although still not enough specifics, of increasing treatment options for addicts, and of new limits on prescriptions of oxycodone, hydrocodone and other opioids.

But Trump spent the days leading up to his announcement touting the idea of the death penalty for opioid dealers, and his Monday speech focused (as much as it focused on anything) on similar "tough on crime" policies.

The problem is, those policies don't get good results. America has learned from previous drug epidemics that such tough-tactics aren't the solution. By all means, prosecute drug dealers and interrupt their trade routes. But if too much emphasis is on chucking people in jail, let alone executing them, America will just raise another generation of damaged, hopeless families.

Many law enforcement officers and politicians in this area openly acknowledged this a few years ago. Now, at least at the federal level, that mindset has returned.

At least the plan released by the administration Monday merely referred to increased use of the death penalty under existing law, rather than increasing the situations where it might be used.

No word if the death penalty, for opioid dealers would extend to the CEOs of com-

panies that shipped millions of unnecessary painkillers to West Virginia, resulting in hundreds of deaths. No word if the doctors who overprescribed opioids, or the pharmacists who ran "pill mills," would face execution.

Even the better parts of Trump's plan have problems. Cutting prescriptions for painkillers sounds good, and West Virginia lawmakers have already taken steps in that direction. They passed a bill (SB 273) earlier this month that would limit many initial opioid prescriptions. Gov. Jim Justice asked for that bill, so even though he hadn't signed it as of Tuesday afternoon, he almost certainly will.

That's useful, but even though prescription painkillers kicked off this epidemic, heroin and fentanyl have eclipsed them in recent years, partially because those addicted to pills had to find other ways to feed their addiction once the pills became harder to get. And chronic pain sufferers who legitimately need opioids will likely find them harder to get under such limits.

The plan for increasing treatment for opioid addicts is still more undefined — as is how any treatment increase would be paid for.

A budget passed by Congress calls for \$6 billion in spending on the opioid crisis over the next five years, but publicists in the officials say that's a drop in the bucket. Trump's budget proposal calls for an additional \$7 billion, which would be two or three drops in the bucket.

There are no easy answers for this huge and disastrous conundrum. But as long as the federal government focuses on punishment, rather than treatment and recovery, the problem will only get bigger.

UMBC has classroom stars too
The Baltimore Sun

If the University of Maryland Baltimore County's stunning upset of No. 1 seed Virginia in the NCAA men's basketball tournament was the first time you ever heard of UMBC, you could be excused for wondering: Is that a community college? No, it's not. Actually, it's something of a nerd factory (and proud of it) that churns out future research scientists, computer scientists, engineers and Md-PhDs at an astonishing rate.

It's a bit of a joke in Maryland that UMBC was repeatedly ranked by U.S. News and World Report as the top up-and-coming university in the nation. The truth is, it up and came quite a while ago. The magazine also ranked it as one of the top 20 schools for undergraduate teaching and one of the five most innovative national universities. Kiplinger's Personal Finance has called it a best value university for eight years in a row.

UMBC President Freeman Hrabowski is something of a living legend among college presidents. He grew up in segregated Alabama — he knew one of the girls killed in the Birmingham church bombing and was part of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "March to the March" — and he became a mathematician. He's led UMBC since 1992, where his research has focused on expanding opportunities for minorities in science. Today, UMBC produces more black Md-PhD students than any other university in the country.

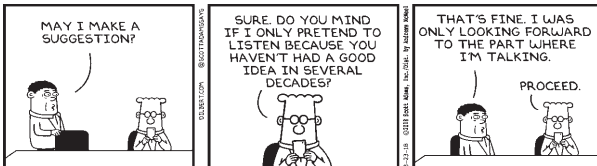
That's not to say that many do not know about UMBC, but the graduate admissions departments at MIT, Caltech, Harvard, Stanford and so on sure do. So does the NSA, which is right down the road from UMBC's campus. So do Facebook and Google, Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin.

What you do know is that this university produces graduates schooled not only in science (there are also excellent humanities students there, too) but in collaboration, innovation and application of what they have learned. Top graduate research programs knew UMBC students were going to be long before the Retrievers trounced Uva.

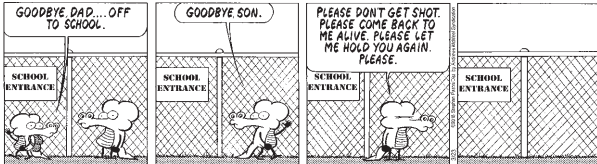
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Pearls Before Swine



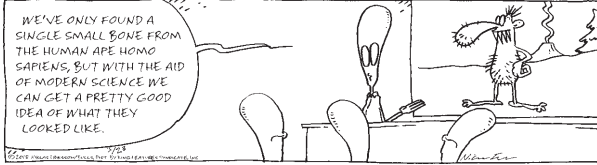
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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53						54				55		

ACROSS

- "Humbul!"
- Foolproof
- Bell sound
- Bio stat
- Construction beam
- Title
- Reject
- Rush job acronym
- Tennis great Williams
- Aachen article
- Dog doc
- Pay a visit
- CBS mogul William
- GPS suggestion
- Mound stat
- Done with
- Sticky stuff
- Sketch
- Lair
- Gallery display
- Jabs
- Shrimp recipe
- Victory
- British ref. work
- Circular window
- Swank
- Economic decline
- Shove
- Half of CVI
- Wyo. neighbor
- Taj Mahal site
- Power co. supply
- Dine

DOWN

- Baseball gear
- Chills and fever
- Frau's mate
- To Sir, with Love' actor Potier
- WWII sub
- Uncivilized
- Automaker Maserati
- Chopin's instrument
- Dawn goddess
- glance
- Napkin's place
- "When pigs fly!"
- Mineral suffix
- Fringe benefit
- Scottish hillside
- Deviates off course
- Pea holders
- 27 With (Fr.)
- Sultry Horne
- Hogwash
- Waffle-making surface
- Dunkable treat
- Mimic
- Open-air meal
- Coffee flavor
- "Holy cow!"
- San — Obispo, Calif.
- Pakistan's language
- Ginger cookie
- 45 Tax prep pro
- Embrace
- Medit. nation
- Tin Man's need

Answer to Previous Puzzle

W	A	N	T	I	H	O	P	H	E	W
A	F	A	R	S	O	S	O	I	R	A
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CRYPTOQUIP

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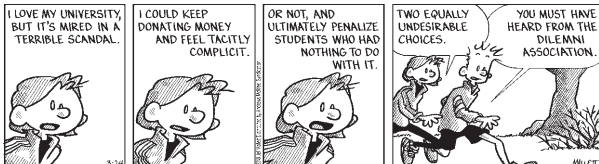
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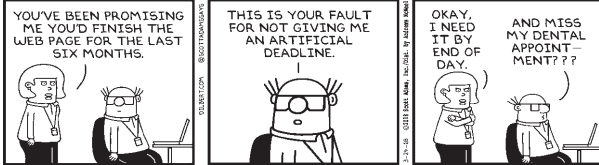
Yesterday's Cryptquip: SO AS TO UNDERSTAND FEELINGS OF REPUGNANCE, SEVERAL PEOPLE CONVENE AND DISCUSSED DISGUST.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: B equals T

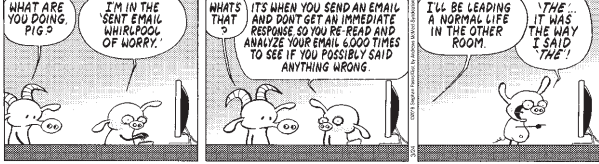
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



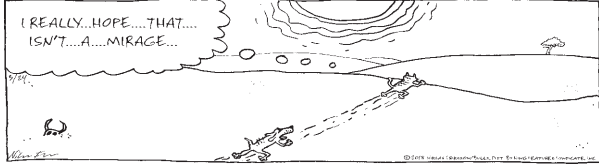
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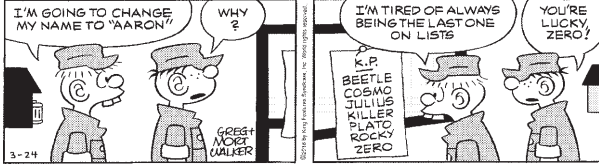
Candorville



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Beetle Bailey



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ACROSS

- 1 Eco-friendly
- 6 Meryl of "The Post"
- 12 Top secret?
- 13 Toy train brand
- 14 Long-haired cat
- 15 Disregard
- 16 Pear variety
- 17 Mature
- 19 Scepter
- 20 Soccer star Mia
- 22 Mai Tai ingredient
- 24 Gore and Roker
- 27 Property claim
- 29 Judy's daughter
- 32 Utterly adorable
- 35 Daring Kniefel
- 36 Break suddenly
- 37 Still
- 38 Presidential nickname
- 40 Teeny
- 42 Mafia boss
- 44 Portal
- 46 Oodles
- 50 To the center
- 52 On an angle
- 54 Flew high
- 55 Change genetically
- 56 Burial chambers
- 57 Lines of fashion?

DOWN

- 1 "a further!" ("Stop!")
- 2 Carpets
- 3 Geologic period
- 4 Always, in verse
- 5 Close call
- 6 Faux pas
- 7 Princeton mascot
- 8 Director Howard
- 9 Great wickedness
- 10 Architect
- 11 Begged
- 12 Bar bill
- 18 "This is no joke!"
- 21 Carte lead-in
- 23 Last (Abbr.)
- 24 Top card
- 25 Candy-heart word
- 26 Name on a baby grand
- 28 Magic and Celts, e.g.
- 30 Orange Muppet
- 31 Hill dweller
- 33 Yellowstone grazer
- 34 Boom times
- 39 Heron's kin
- 41 1945 conference site
- 42 Platter
- 43 — about (circa)
- 45 Tosses in
- 47 Clay-rich soil
- 48 Makes a choice
- 49 Golf peg
- 51 Dadaist Jean
- 53 Take to court

Answer to Previous Puzzle

B	A	H	S	U	R	E	P	E	A	L
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3-24

CRYPTOQUIP

DIHXAZKSTH DPCKP DADRAZ
QBAJJKOV PJSOV P RKV RSQI
SC BPXAZ KO HYSXJPOQ:

XLA JSYL OAHH DSRHXAZ.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I GOT SOME OPEN-TOE SUMMER SHOES IN THE MAIL LAST WEEK. THE PACKAGE SAID "SANDAL WITH CARE."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals L

Mobile



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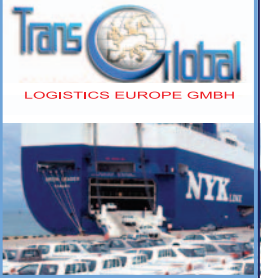
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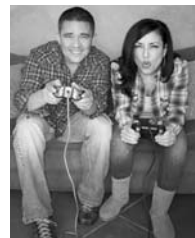
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THE STARS AND STRIPES

Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces

in the European Theater of Operations

Vol. 1—No. 241

1 Fr.

1 Fr.

Sunday, March 25, 1945

For the troops

Stars and Stripes was a primary source of news for the troops at the Front and behind the lines in World War II. Although it printed only in the European theater during the war, it covered news from all theaters.



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Pro soccer

EASTERN CONFERENCE									
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA	1	2	3
New York City FC	3	0	0	9	6	1	1	1	1
Portland Timbers	2	0	0	6	6	2	1	1	1
Atlanta United	2	0	0	6	6	2	1	1	1
Philadelphia	1	0	1	3	2	0	1	1	1
Columbus	1	0	1	3	2	0	1	1	1
Montreal	1	2	0	3	4	6	1	1	1
New England	1	2	0	3	4	6	1	1	1
D.C. United	0	2	2	0	3	4	1	1	1
Orlando City	0	2	2	0	3	4	1	1	1
Chicago Fire	0	2	2	0	3	4	1	1	1

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Saturday's games
New York City FC at New England
Portland at D.C. United
D.C. United at Columbus
Minnesota United at New York City
Sporting Kansas City at Colorado Rapids

Friday, March 30
Real Salt Lake at Toronto FC
Seattle Sounders FC at Portland Timbers
New York City FC at Atlanta United
Atlanta United at FC Dallas
D.C. United at Sporting Kansas City
New England at Houston Dynamo
Philadelphia at Columbus Crew
Montreal at Seattle Sounders

Thursday, April 5
Houston at New York
Los Angeles FC at Atlanta United
Philadelphia at Portland Timbers
D.C. United at Toronto FC
Atlanta United at FC Dallas
Columbus at Chicago Fire
Vancouver at Real Salt Lake

College hockey

NCAA Tournament

NORTHEAST REGIONAL

First Round
Saturday, March 24
Cornell (21-5-2) vs. Boston University (22-14-3)

Championship
Sunday, March 25
Cornell-Boston University winner vs. Michigan-Northeastern winner

EAST REGIONAL

First Round
Friday, March 23
Notre Dame (25-2) vs. Michigan Tech (22-16-5)

Championship
Saturday, March 24
Notre Dame-Michigan Tech winner vs. Providence (23-11-4) or Clarkson (23-10-6)

MIDWEST REGIONAL

First Round
Saturday, March 24
Denver (22-8-5) vs. Penn State (18-14-2)

Championship
Sunday, March 25
Ohio State-Princeton winner vs. Denver-Penn State winner

WEST REGIONAL

First Round
Saturday, March 24
St. Cloud State (25-8-6) vs. Air Force (22-13-5)

Championship
Sunday, March 25
St. Cloud State-Air Force winner vs. Minnesota State Markato-Mankato-Mankato winner

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL

First Round
Thursday, April 5
Northwest champion vs. Utah Valley
Midwest champion vs. West champion

National Championship
Saturday, April 7
Semifinal winners

College basketball

NIT

Quarterfinals
Tuesday, March 20
Penn State 85, Maryland 80

Wednesday, March 21
Western Kentucky 93, Oklahoma State 84
Utah 67, Saint Mary's 58, OT

Semifinals
Thursday, March 22
Western Kentucky (27-10) vs. Utah (22-11)

Championship
Thursday, March 29
Semifinal winners

CIT

Quarterfinals
Wednesday, March 21
UC 83, Austin Peay 81

Thursday, March 22
Northern Colorado 88, San Diego 75

Saturday, March 24
San Houston State (20-14) at UTSA (21-14)

Championship
Wednesday, March 21
San Francisco 77, San Diego 75

Thursday, March 22
Campbell 81, San Diego 75

Saturday, March 24
North Texas (18-17) vs. Campbell-San Francisco

Championship
Wednesday, March 28
North Texas (18-17) vs. Campbell-San Francisco

Friday, March 30
North Texas (18-17) vs. Campbell-San Francisco

Golf

Match Play

At Austin Country Club
Thursday, March 22
Yardage: 7,068 Par 71

First Round
Seeding (in parentheses)
Pat Perez (15), United States, halved with Si Woo Kim (3), South Korea.

Gary Woodland (24), United States, halved with Webb Simpson (37), United States.

Justin Thomas (2), United States, def. Luke List (40), United States, 2 and 1.

Francesco Molinari (21), Italy, def. Patton Kizzire (48), United States, 3 and 2.

Tyrell Hatfield (12), England, def. Alexander Levy (55), France, 3 and 2.

Brendan Steele (36), United States, 2 and 1.

Hideki Matsuyama (5), Japan, def. Yuka Sasaki (53), Japan, 2 and 1.

Cameron Smith (50), Australia, def. Patrick Cantlay (30), United States, 2 up.

Alexander Noron (13), Sweden, def. Kevin Na (61), United States, 4 and 2.

Tony Finau (29), United States, def. Thomas Pieters (39), Belgium, 2 and 1.

Jon Rahm (3), Spain, def. Jordan Spieth (44), United States, def. Charles Schwartzel (49), South Africa, 2 and 1.

Patrick Reed (19), United States, def. Li Haotong (34), China, 3 and 1.

Paul Casey (8), England, def. Tommy Fleetwood (9), England, 3 and 1.

Kevin Chappell (33), United States, def. Daniel Berger (56), United States, 3 and 1.

Jason Day (8), Australia, def. James Hahn (56), United States, 4 and 2.

Si Woo Kim (3), South Korea, def. Jason Dufner (42), United States, 2 up.

Matt Kuchar (16), United States, def. Yuta Ikeda (57), Japan, 3 and 1.

Justin Thomas (2), United States, def. Dustin Johnson (1), United States, 3 and 1.

Kevin Kisner (32), United States, halved with Adam Hadwin (38), Canada.

Julian Suri (64), United States, def. Marc Leishman (11), Australia, 3 and 2.

Bubba Watson (35), United States, def. Daniel Berger (56), United States, 3 and 1.

Peter Uihlein (57), United States, def. Rory McIlroy (6), Northern Ireland, 2 and 1.

Brian Harman (18), United States, halved with Jonathon Vegas (44), Venezuela.

Charles Howell III (59), United States, def. Phil Mickelson (14), United States, 3 and 1.

Rafa Cabrera Bello (17), Spain, def. Satoshi Kodaira (40), Japan, 2 and 1.

Jon Rahm (3), Spain, def. Keegan Bradley (63), United States, 2 up.

Justin Thomas (2), United States, def. Sergio Garcia (7), Spain, def. Shubhan Singh (52), India, 3 and 1.

Andrew Schauffele (20), United States, def. Dylan Frittelli (41), South Africa, 1 up.

NCAA Men's Division II Tournament

Semifinals
Thursday, March 22
Ferris State (30-1) vs. West Texas A&M (32-3)

Queens (NC) (32-3) vs. Northern State (35-3)

Championship
Saturday, March 24
Semifinal winners

Women's NIT

Third Round
Thursday, March 22
Purdue (20-13) at Indiana (19-14)

Friday, March 23
James Madison (23-10) at West Virginia (22-11)

Thursday, March 22
Fordham (24) at Virginia Tech (20-13)

Queens (NC) (32-3) at St. John's (18-14)
Georgia Tech (20-13) at Alabama (19-13)

Michigan State (19-13) at South Dakota (25-8)

TCU (21-12) at New Mexico (25-10)
Friday, March 23
UC Davis (27-6) at Kansas State (18-15)

WB1
Friday, March 23
South Alabama (21-12) at Ole Miss (17-13)

Saturday, March 24
Nevada (19-16) at Kansas (24-9)

Championship
March 28 or 29
Semifinal winners

NCAA Women's Division II Tournament

Semifinals
Wednesday, March 21
Central Missouri 70, Union (Tenn.) 57

Thursday, March 22
Indiana (Pa.) 68, Oklahoma State 68

Championship
March 28 or 29
Central Missouri (29-3) vs. Ashland (36-0)

Pro baseball

Spring training

AMERICAN LEAGUE

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Chicago 16 10 0.615

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Miami 13 10 0.565

Arizona 13 10 0.565

Atlanta 13 13 0.500

Los Angeles 13 13 0.500

Arizona 13 13 0.500

Washington 11 13 0.458

Arizona 13 13 0.500

Philadelphia 10 15 0.400

Cincinnati 9 16 0.360

New York 8 16 0.333

Wednesday's games

Boston 8, Tampa Bay 3

Houston 8, Washington 3

Los Angeles 12, Miami 7

Philadelphia 7, Toronto 7

Los Angeles 12, Cleveland 8

Milwaukee (ss) 4, Oakland 3

San Diego 4, Chicago White Sox 3

Minnesota 3, Pittsburgh 1

N.Y. Yankees 9, Baltimore 4

Los Angeles 12, Cleveland 8

San Francisco 14, Arizona 0

Seattle 7, Milwaukee (ss) 3

Atlanta vs. St. Louis at Jupiter, Fla.

Los Angeles vs. Baltimore at Sarasota, Fla.

Detroit vs. Philadelphia at Clearwater, Fla.

St. Louis vs. Houston at West Palm Beach, Fla.

N.Y. Yankees vs. Minnesota at Fort Myers, Fla.

Tampa Bay vs. Toronto (ss) at Dunedin, Fla.

Colorado vs. Oakland at Mesa, Ariz.

Kansas City vs. Milwaukee at Phoenix

Arizona vs. Cleveland at Bradenton, Ariz.

Toronto (ss) vs. Pittsburgh at Bradenton, Fla.

Washington vs. N.Y. Mets at Port St. Lucie, Fla.

Cincinnati vs. Texas (ss) at Surprise, Ariz.

Chicago White Sox vs. Arizona at Scottsdale, Ariz.

Texas (ss) vs. Seattle at Peoria, Ariz.

Los Angeles vs. St. Francisco at Scottsdale, Ariz.

L.A. Angels vs. L.A. Dodgers at Glendale, Ariz.

Tennis

Miami Open

Wednesday
At The Tennis Center at Crandon Park
Purse: Men, \$5.9 million (Masters 1000); Women, \$3.7 million (Premier)

Surface: Hard-outdoor

Singles
Men
Joao Sousa (Portugal) def. Ryan Harrison, United States, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (4).

Robin Haase, Netherlands, def. Yuichi Sugita, Japan, 6-4, 6-1.

Jiri Vesely, Czech Republic, def. Lukas Loscutoff, Slovakia, 7-6 (2), 6-4.

Mikael Ymer, Sweden, def. Jan-Lennard Struff, Germany, 3-6, 7-5, 6-4.

Maximilian Marterer, Germany, def. Marton Fucsovics, Hungary, 6-4, 6-4.

Pierre-Hugues Herbert, France, def. Taylor Fritz, United States, 7-6 (4), 6-4.

Matthew Ebden, Australia, def. Gilles Simon, France, 6-3, 6-7 (2), 7-6 (1).

John Millman, Australia, def. Peter Gojowczyk, Poland, 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Michael Mmoh, United States, def. Christopher Eubanks, United States, 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Beny Chazal, France, def. Rogerio Dutra Silva, Brazil, 6-3, 7-6 (2).

Nicolas Pietrangeli, def. Cameron Norrie, Britain, 7-6 (3), 6-2.

Benoit Paire, France, def. Mischa Zverev, Germany, 6-4, 6-1.

Vasek Pospisil, Canada, def. Ivo Karlovic, Croatia, 6-2, 6-4.

Liam Broady, Britain, def. Bjorn Fratangelo, United States, 6-4, 6-3.

Mikhail Yuzhny, Russia, def. Guido Pella, Argentina, 7-6 (3), 7-6 (2).

Jared Donaldson, United States, def. Marcos Baghdatis, Cyprus, 6-3, 6-4.

First Round
Carina Witthöft, Germany, def. Tatjana Maria, Germany, 6-3, 6-4.

Zarina Diyas, Kazakhstan, def. Jennifer Brady, United States, 7-5, 6-3 (8).

Ekatrina Makarova, Russia, def. Ekaterina Burakova, Russia, 6-3, 6-4.

Monica Niculescu, Romania, def. Yulia Putintseva, Kazakhstan, 6-2, 6-4.

Alice Cornet, France, def. Bethanie Mattek-Sands, United States, 6-3, 6-5.

Alison Riske, United States, def. Magda Linette, Poland, 6-0, 6-0.

Wang Yafan, China, def. Marketa Vondrovicova, Czech Republic, 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (0).

Hsieh Su-wei, Taiwan, def. Katie Boulter, Britain, 6-3, 6-4.

Victoria Azarenka, Belarus, def. CICI Becik, United States, 6-0, 6-0.

Océane Dodin, France, def. Veronica Kuznetsov, Russia, 6-2, 6-0.

Danielle Collins, United States, def. Irina-Camelia Begu, Romania, 6-3, 6-0.

Naomi Osaka, Japan, def. Serena Williams, United States, 6-3, 6-0.

Varvara Lepchenko, United States, def. Madison Keys, United States, 6-4, 5-7, 7-5.

Natalia Vikhlyantseva, Russia, def. Rebecca Peterson, Sweden, 6-3, 6-4.

Aryna Sabalenka, Belarus, def. Madison Keyes, United States, 6-3, 6-4.

Andrea Pettenko, Germany, def. Polona Herczeg, Hungary, 6-3, 6-4.

Sofia Kenin, United States, def. Stefanie Vogele, Switzerland, 6-4, 6-4.

Monica Puig, Puerto Rico, def. Camilla Giorgi, Italy, 6-0, 7-5.

Petra Marangnik, def. Lauren Davis, United States, 6-1, 7-5.

Monica Puig, Puerto Rico, def. Sam Stosur, Australia, 6-3, 6-4.

Second Round
Garbine Muguruza, Spain, def. Amanda Anisimova, United States, walkover.

AP spotlight
March 23
1939 - Long Island University finishes the season undefeated after a 44-32 victory over Loyola, its longest winning streak in school history.

1974 - Maurice Richard, playing in his second Stanley Cup Playoff game, scores five goals in a 5-1 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference Finals.

1986 - Alex Green and Ralph Beard combine for 26 points to lead Kentucky to a 58-20 win over Georgia in the NCAA basketball championship.

1988 - The San Francisco 49ers won an 83-71 victory over Iowa in the NCAA basketball championship.

1998 - The San Francisco 49ers defeated Villi Chamblin and Kansas in triple-overtime, 34-31, in the Super Bowl.

The Tar He

HIGH SCHOOL: DODEA PACIFIC

On the right track

Perry working through logistics of starting new program while preparing for coach's handoff

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — Anna Simmermon shielded her eyes from the late afternoon sun angling over the field at Matthew C. Perry High School.

As practice wound down, she gazed at her track and field charges going through their paces.

Skye LeBreton, a sophomore and the Samurai's sprint captain, led her teammates through relay baton exchange drills. In the discus cage, burly sophomore Will Dearinge sent the discus flying. At the field's opposite end, slender freshman Sean Swindell made another long jump.

Simmermon, the first-year Samurai's head coach, said she felt conflicted. Just two weeks earlier, Perry had just 12 athletes. On this day, the team counted 23.

But Simmermon transfers from Iwakuni along with her Marine Corps fighter pilot husband Jesse at season's end. And one of her top assistants is leaving as well. That would leave the Samurai track program at a critical developmental stage without the coach who founded it.

It takes an enormous amount of work to build up a team realistically and to compete in events," said Simmermon, a substitute teacher who competed in jumps, pole vault, and the 200 and 400 relays at Elco High School in Eastern Lebanon County, Pa. Jesse was a high school teammate.

"If you don't have a strong handoff" to another coach to take over the team next season and beyond, "the team could struggle."

In the run-up to the new school campus that opened in January 2017, Perry has been in the business of startups. And the school's success in winning championships



Matthew C. Perry, sophomore thrower Will Dearinge launches the discus during practice.

has been surprising.

It took just three years for Perry football to win a Far East Division II title as a varsity program. That team's coach, Frank Macias, headed the school's first D-II baseball champions in May. Under second-year coach Chris Munsell, wrestling went from ninth place to second in D-II.

But track? That's a different beast "and the bigger the team, the more you need a large number of assistants and volunteers from the community to make it work. And right now, we just don't have that," Simmermon said.

Perry athletics director George Williams compares the building of a track team to football in terms of the number of players and coaches needed.

"Those are the challenges," he said. Nobody on full-time faculty offered to coach in its first season, so Simmermon stepped up. She spent weeks in the fall recruiting athletes and seeking assistants. The school has an eight-lane track and a fully-automated timing system.

"The 23 athletes we have now, consider they're competing against softball, soccer and baseball for athletes, those numbers are pretty high, and we're expected to



PHOTOS BY DAVE ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Matthew C. Perry track and field coach Anna Simmermon goes through instructions with her team during a break in practice.

grow," she said. "I allowed other athletes to join the team later because it took so long to get the word out."

Fuelling that growth will be the continued expansion of the Marine Corps Air station and inbound USS Ronald Reagan carrier air group families from Naval Air Facility Atsugi in the coming years.

But even a larger contingent of athletes and coaches won't automatically spell development, Simmermon said.

It would also take a "signature victory," be it the team topping the weekly regular-season meet standings or one of the athletes upsetting a regular favorite in a particular event.

She cited sophomore LeBreton, the team's sprint captain, as somebody who "can do it."

LeBreton came to Iwakuni from James Campbell High School in Hawaii, where she ran sprints for a school of 5,000-plus and a team of more than 200 members. Perry's enrollment is currently 205.

"Coming here, I was surprised" at how small the team was, LeBreton said. And she found she was "getting all the attention" from teammates looking to her for leadership as she was the veteran of a big-school stateside program. "That's hard to grasp."

Over the long haul, "it takes consistency, dedication on the part of the individuals in

charge of the program and building your athletes continuously," said Ron Merriwether, Humphreys' fourth-year coach.

The Blackhawks struggled in their two seasons before the boys won the Far East D-II title last May and they did that with just nine athletes. Now, "everybody wants to be part of a winning program" at Humphreys, Merriwether said. "It's about being relevant."

Perry entered its first meet last Saturday at Yokota, where the Samurai boys placed eighth among eight teams and seventh among seven girls teams.

This season, Perry travels weekly by bus to Yokota, which hosts all the DODEA Japan and Kanto Plain regular-season meets.

Williams said Perry is hoping to host three regular-season meets next season. But if that's not possible, "we're going to try to do at least one," he said.

Even though Simmermon is leaving, Williams says he holds high hopes for the future.

"We will have to find a new head coach," he said. "It's just a matter of having the program in place next year, and it will, and it will continue to grow. We'll adapt and we'll move on."

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Game of the week Weekend peek

Baseball
Yokota at Perry

When: 4:30 p.m. Friday and 9:30 a.m. Saturday.

Where: Atago Sports Complex, Iwakuni, Japan.

What: Second of two regular-season get-togethers between the winners of the last two Far East Division II tournaments. The host Samurai edged out the Panthers 2-1 last May 17 for the school's first D-II title; the Panthers had won Far East the previous two years. The Panthers downed the Samurai 17-2 and 5-2 in their first weekend meeting March 23-24 at Yokota.

Players to watch: Senior Garrett Macias leads the Samurai with a .647 batting average, 11-for-17 with six extra-base hits and seven RBIs; he's 3-2 on the mound with 27 strikeouts in 15½ innings and a 4.02 ERA. El Perez pitches with 15 RBIs and sports a .600 average. For the Panthers, Sean Caffrey and Glen Willingham each sport identical .667 averages on 10-of-15 hitting, each with nine RBIs. On the mound, Sean Caffrey leads the Panthers with a 1.75 ERA, while Jack Winkler has 13 strikeouts and allowed just one walk in eight innings. Overall, Panthers pitchers have struck out 67 in 40 innings.

Perry aims for return to form at home field

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

IWAKUNI, Japan — Samurai baseball has had a lot to get excited about in the last year.

If it's not about the first Far East Division II Tournament title in the program's history, it's the team's adopted home stadium in the Atago Sports Complex, some 40 minutes from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni's back gate, that's getting raves lately.

It's here Matthew C. Perry will play host this weekend to the team the Samurai vanquished 2-1 last May 17 for the D-II title, Yokota, and E.J. King, rebuilding himself after taking a one-year hiatus.

And to hear the Samurai and Panthers coaches talk about the Kizuna Stadium, which was dedicated in November with a friendship game featuring players from both teams, you'd think they were discussing the Taj Mahal.

"It's surreal, to believe a stadium like that is our home field,"



LILY SCHESSEN/special To Stripes

Matthew C. Perry senior right-hander Garrett Macias delivers against E.J. King in the first DODEA Japan regular-season game played at Kizuna Park.

said Samurai coach Frank Macias. "Our kids are elated to be a part of that history. It's baseball Americana."

"That facility is phenomenal. State of the art," Panthers coach Steven Ferch said.

The question will be whether the Samurai, whose roster has been riddled with injuries to key players such as senior Chad Schuch and junior Ethan Peter-

son, can measure up to their 15-1-2 season mark from last year.

So far, they're 3-4 this season, including two losses at Yokota the first weekend of March and a 7-5 defeat last weekend at Sasebo Naval Base to the Cobras — their first loss to King since 2014.

"We have a lot of young kids learning the game, making improvements, but it's a hard game to learn in three months," Macias said. "Yokota has so many pitchers, an experience advantage. It'll be a good test to see how much we've improved in a month."

"We're really fortunate; we have quite a few guys who can get on the mound and throw strikes (and) we have some hitters out there," Ferch said of players such as Sean Caffrey, Jack Winkler, Nick Yingling and Logan Ferch, his son.

"They're going to try to protect their turf," Ferch said of the Samurai. "They always seem to play us tough. They have tenacity. They don't give up. That's hard to teach."

As for the Cobras, they've lost five of six games, but one of them was a 2-1 defeat to open the season at Iwakuni, and King opened the series last weekend at Sasebo with a 7-5 win over Perry.

Coach Joseph Schinker "is doing a great job of resurrecting that program," Macias said, adding that Schinker's son, freshman Leo, "is a one-man wrecking crew."

Elsewhere, Robert D. Edgren finally gets to play some games at home; baseball, soccer and softball welcome Zama this weekend.

Another busy locale is Daegu; it hosts Seoul Foreign and Seoul American in soccer and Seoul and Osan in baseball and softball. For the first time this season, all three northwest Pacific districts host a track and field meet this weekend; Okinawa's quad meet Saturday at Kubasaki is the last preparation before the 14th Mike Perry Memorial Meet next Saturday, also at Kubasaki.

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HIGH SCHOOL: DODEA EUROPE

Baseball, softball preview

Ramstein, Sigonella begin title defenses

BY GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

The Ramstein Royals and Sigonella Jaguars will open defense of their matching baseball and softball championships this weekend as the 2018 DODEA Europe baseball and softball seasons begin their two-month run.

Ramstein, the Division I champion in both baseball and softball last season, opens with a Saturday set at SHAPE, Sigonella, which swept the small-school baseball and softball titles last spring, join Aviano and Vicenza in a four-school, two-day set at Naples.

The season quickly adjourns for spring break after a handful of March 30 games, then begins its stretch run on April 14. The European baseball and softball tournaments are scheduled for May 24-26 in the Kaiserslautern Military Community.

Baseball

The gap between the Royals and the rest of DODEA Europe baseball was narrowed considerably last spring. But it wasn't fully bridged.

Ramstein persevered to its fifth straight Division I championship even after a season full of the kind of adversity it hadn't faced in earlier years of its ongoing dynasty. The Royals saw a multiple-year winning streak ended in a four-loss regular season, lost a pool playoff game to Stuttgart, sur-



MARTIN EONASH/Stars and Stripes

Vilseck's Kayla Silden hits the ball in a game against Weisbaden during the softball championship tournament in Kaiserslautern, Germany, last May. The senior will be a leader of a team that hopes to break through in Division I.

vived a semifinal against Wiesbaden by a single run and outlasted upset-minded Lakenheath 8-6 in the title game to hoist a particularly hard-earned trophy.

The 2018 season figures to present an equally monumental challenge for the Royals.

Head coach Travis Shoffner has just six returning players, including only two starters, with which to build a foundation for his first year as Ramstein head coach. The roster features 10 combined freshmen and sophomores, a departure from recent Royal teams that placed dominant upperclassmen atop the pitching rotation and in the heart of the batting order.

But the Royals aren't looking at an entirely blank slate. Shoffner has been on the team's coaching staff for five years and is stressing "program stability" after taking over for outgoing coach Tom Vost. Tieran Shoffner, Nemo Kinde and Jerod Junkins give the Royals three solid pitching options, while junior Nathan Krantz brings a solid bat and glove to the key position of centerfield.

Still, Ramstein's unprecedented uncertainty presents an opportunity for those teams that have spent the past few years looking up at the Royals, including returning runner-up Lakenheath, displaced powerhouse Stuttgart and perennial contenders Kaiserslautern and Wiesbaden.

Justin Bates, the final baseball coach at Heidelberg before that historic school's closure in 2013, takes over as head coach of the Kaiserslautern Raiders after years as an assistant. Four returning starters, headlined by versatile senior Nolan Sherman, give Kaiserslautern, the 2016 runner-up in a devastating rain-shortened title game, the chance to return to the elimination round after missing the semifinals last season.

Wiesbaden, which took a similarly heart-breaking 4-3 loss to Ramstein in last year's semifinal, fields an intriguing mix of newcomers and proven performers. Left-handed pitcher Jesper Carabajal, a senior who also played for the Warriors as a freshman, should present considerable problems for opposing lineups.

Naples and Vilseck, meanwhile, could further complicate the playoff picture if their young rosters coalesce in time for the tournament.

Among small schools, the defending champion Sigonella Jaguars remain the team to beat behind returning senior and 2017 title-game hero Alex Ogletree and fellow All-European Mason Carter.

Spangdahlem, known until this school year as the Bitburg Barons, will look to renew its championship push in the ab-

sence of seasoned head coach Wayne Phillips. New coach Daniel Little and senior pitching ace Max Little lead a team coming off two straight championship game losses, including a 2016 setback to Rota.

Softball

Few teams in any DODEA Europe discipline have dominated their sport as thoroughly as the Ramstein Royals did the 2017 softball season.

Ramstein went 14-0 on the regular season, including a 12-0 mark in Division I games, and was similarly dominant in the postseason in winning its five tournament games by a combined score of 74-12. The Royals punctuated their stunning spring with a 16-1 rout of the Stuttgart Panthers, the archrival that was crowned the 2016 champion when that season's title game was cancelled due to weather.

While they'll be hard-pressed to approach last year's level of dominance, the Royals enter 2018 as a strong bet to repeat as champion. They'll send out DODEA Europe's most overwhelming pitcher in reigning Stars and Stripes softball Athlete of the Year Abby Walker, while senior shortstop Savannah Sparrow brings considerable punch to a lineup featuring 11 returning players.

Expect old rival Stuttgart to again present Ramstein's most formidable obstacle. New coach Michael Lady inherits a roster featuring a deep pitching staff led by senior Kira Wright, a solid infield featuring corner specialist Rachel Johnson and a powerful lineup including senior utility player Tayah Curry.

Elsewhere in the division, senior stars Ally Alamos of Kaiserslautern and Kayla Silden of Vilseck will look to guide their respective teams into the title picture, while a promising Vicenza roster might boost the Division I profile of the former Division II powerhouse.

Reigning Division II/III champion Sigonella lost seven senior starters from last year's team but remains a small-school title threat behind juniors Hannah Davis and Jessica Jacobs. The Jaguars get an early taste of divisional competition this weekend as they share a four-team field with Aviano, the divisional champion in 2015 and 2016.

Spangdahlem, which took a tough 9-5 loss to Sigonella in last year's final, has a new coach, Tammy Wallis. Catcher Justine Tila is a candidate for a breakout season for the Sentinels.

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Weekend peek

D-I teams clash before spring break

BY GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

Western Germany's big four DODEA Europe high schools will struggle for large-school supremacy on the soccer pitch this weekend as Ramstein faces the Wiesbaden and Kaiserslautern takes on Stuttgart.

The early-season Division I clashes headline the last full weekend of DODEA Europe sports action prior to spring break; though a handful of matches are set for March 30, the soccer schedule resumes in earnest the weekend of April 13-14.

That means now is the time for large-school contenders to align themselves on the proper side of the standings.

On the boys side, defending champion Kaiserslautern got off to a winning start last weekend with a 2-1 comeback defeat of solid Division II program Black Forest Academy. Now the rebuilt Raiders get their first look at divisional competition in a Panthers team coming off a frustrating 1-0 loss to Wiesbaden.

The Warriors, meanwhile, will put that nascent win streak on the line against 2017 runner-up Ramstein. The match is the season opener for the Royals and comes six days ahead of an anticipated rematch of last year's European final loss to the archival Raiders.

Stuttgart, meanwhile, landed the first punch of the Division I girls season last weekend. The Panthers routed Wiesbaden 5-1 to earn some redemption after suffering a shootout loss to the Warriors in last year's European title match. Now the supplant champions will look for a second straight statement win at the expense of the Raiders, which played Black Forest to a 1-1 tie last weekend.

Ramstein, which once stood alongside Stuttgart as Division I's overarching girls soccer powerhouses, has seen its stature slip in recent seasons. Wins over Wiesbaden this weekend and Kaiserslautern next weekend will further the Royals' goal of restoring the program's former glory.

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Game of the week

Boys soccer: AOSR at Marymount

Saturday

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do," goes the well-known saying. This spring, visitors to Rome might consider scoring a soccer goal or two.

Rome-based schools AOSR and MMI continued to set the standard for DODEA-Europe Division II soccer as another spring season got underway last weekend. The AOSR Falcons routed Vicenza 10-3, while the MMI Royals scored all of their goals in the second half of a 5-2 defeat of Aviano.

Now the two Roman powerhouses turn their efforts towards each other, and such occasions usually produce a remarkably high level of competition. That was certainly the case last spring, when Marymount edged AOSR 3-2 in overtime in a classic Division II title match. This weekend's meeting might represent not just a rematch of last year's final, but a preview of this year's.



MICHAEL B. KELLER/Stars and Stripes

Sigonella's Alex Ogletree rounds third during the DODEA Europe baseball tournament last May. Ogletree and fellow All-European Mason Carter give the Jaguars a crew that can contend again.

NBA



MARK HUMPHREY/AP

The Grizzlies' Tyreke Evans, left, fouls the Chicago Bulls' Antonio Blakeney last Thursday in Memphis, Tenn. Nearly a third of the 30 NBA teams are brutally bad this season and it's hard to believe some aren't losing on purpose.

Not everyone is playing to win

By BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — After 20 years in the NBA, Dirk Nowitzki can't be fooled. He knows when teams aren't giving an honest effort, when they are out there playing but not playing to win.

"It's pretty obvious," Nowitzki said. "Easy to spot, the NBA is finding tanking not so easy to stop."

It's a problem for the league office, which has fined owners, chastised teams and sent out league-wide memos on the topic. And with big brother watching, teams are abiding by the letter of the law, but arguably not the spirit of its intent.

Tanking is viewed as a solution — sometimes the only one — for some teams and their fans, hoping something good can come from being bad if they cash in at the lottery and land a top draft pick.

Nearly a third of the 30 NBA teams are brutally bad this season and it's hard to believe some aren't losing on purpose. Phoenix, Memphis, Atlanta, Orlando, Dallas, Sacramento, Brooklyn, Chicago and New York should all lose 50 or more games, and only the Nets aren't motivated to lose — they don't own their first-round pick.

Everyone else comes under suspicion when something strange happens:

■ What was leading scorer Dennis Schröder doing on the bench for the entire

fourth quarter of Atlanta's one-point victory over Phoenix on March 4?

■ Why did Tyreke Evans foul Chicago rookie Antonio Blakeney attempting a three-pointer with 1.8 seconds left and Memphis leading Chicago by one?

■ Are some of these guys on injury lists really hurt?

New York hosted its own version of March Madness over the last week, with the Knicks and Nets both playing Nowitzki's Mavericks, before Memphis and Chicago came to the city on the same sad Monday. That's five of the nine bottom teams — including the only two known to have been contacted by the league office because of their tactics.

Of course, tanking is a discussion for fans and media. Nobody from a team ever dares talk about losing on purpose.

Except Mark Cuban.

When the Dallas owner went on Hall of Famer Julius Erving's podcast in February and said he told his players that "losing is our best option," the league fined him \$600,000 for "public statements detrimental to the NBA."

That put a spotlight on the Mavericks. So if they were planning on packing it in and trying to add more young legs in the draft for Nowitzki's expected swan song, they had to change plans.

"Well, I think Mark messed that up for us," Nowitzki said, with a straight face.

They went on a recent stretch of three wins in four games — two were against the Grizzlies and Knicks — and Nowitzki insists teams are still tanking despite the league's mandate.

"There's obviously some teams that are going for some losses now, and we're one of the teams that still wants to win and we'll see where we end up at the end in the draft," he said. "But we're still playing. We want to have a winning culture for our young guys."

A matchup of 24-45 vs. 25-45 is often one to avoid, but longtime Chicago fan Louis Rodriguez was thrilled to catch Bulls-Knicks. Dressed in his Bulls shirt and red hat, he came from Naugatuck, Conn., with his step-sister Shannon Bahme, who was wearing a Knicks shirt.

The Knicks have been losing for years, so it's easier for their fans to accept being bad. Some remember three years ago, when back-to-back victories in the final week of a 17-win season knocked them out of pole position in the lottery. Minnesota beat them by a game for the worst record, then won the lottery and the right to draft All-Star Karl-Anthony Towns.

So are the Knicks tanking?

"I think they're losing on purpose," Bahme said. "They've got to be. I mean, you can't play that bad. (Head coach Jeff) Hornacek ... just puts in people that do not belong in."

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Toronto	23	19	73%	—
x-Boston	48	23	.676	4½
Cleveland	32	29	.586	10½
Philadelphia	40	30	.571	12
Indiana	41	31	.569	12
Washington	40	31	.563	12½
Miami	39	33	.542	14
Orlando	37	34	.521	15½
Detroit	32	39	.451	20½
Charlotte	31	41	.431	22
New York	26	46	.361	27
Chicago	24	47	.338	28½
Brooklyn	23	49	.319	30
Orlando	21	59	.256	31½
Atlanta	21	50	.296	31½

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Houston	57	14	.803	—
y-Golden State	53	18	.746	4
Portland	44	27	.620	13
Oklahoma City	43	30	.589	15
San Antonio	42	30	.583	15½
New Orleans	42	30	.583	15½
Minnesota	41	31	.569	16½
Utah	40	31	.563	17
Denver	39	33	.542	18½
L.A. Clippers	38	33	.535	19
L.A. Lakers	31	39	.443	25½
Sacramento	29	49	.319	34½
Dallas	22	50	.310	36
Memphis	19	52	.268	38
Phoenix	18	53	.254	38½

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

Wednesday's games

Cleveland 132, Toronto 129
Philadelphia 119, Memphis 105
Charlotte 111, Brooklyn 105
Miami 119, New York 98
Denver 135, Chicago 102
L.A. Clippers 127, Milwaukee 120
New Orleans 96, Indiana 92
San Antonio 98, Washington 90

Thursday's games

Memphis at Charlotte
Philadelphia at Orlando
Detroit at Houston
L.A. Lakers at New Orleans
Utah at Dallas
Atlanta at Sacramento

Friday's games

Denver at Washington
L.A. Clippers at Indiana
Brooklyn at Toronto
Minnesota at New York
Cleveland at Cleveland
Miami at Oklahoma City
Milwaukee at Chicago
Utah at San Antonio
Boston at Portland
Atlanta at Golden State

Saturday's games

Minnesota at Philadelphia
Chicago at Detroit
Phoenix at Orlando
L.A. Lakers at Memphis
New Orleans at Houston
Charlotte at Dallas

McCutchen hopes meetings with players show refs' commitment

By BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — As Monty McCutchen visits NBA teams on behalf of referees, he's hearing plenty of what he calls constructive criticism, delivered in a professional way.

"That's exactly what we're hoping to attain on the floor, is that no one is asking everyone to agree, no one is asking for there not to be constructive criticism," McCutchen said. "What we are trying to achieve is the sense of how to disagree respectfully, how to disagree with an empathy and understanding."

McCutchen left his job on the floor during this season to become the league's vice president and head of referee development and training. With some high tensions with both players and coaches, he and head of referee operations Michelle Johnson have been conducting respect-for-the-game sessions with each team in hopes of creating a stronger working relationship.

He believes the meetings are going well, that players are seeing the commitment of the officials to have better communication.

Though some players have complained that referees won't engage in discussions with them on the court, McCutchen doesn't believe relations have worsened this season, echoing comments made by Commissioner Adam Silver at the All-Star break. Yet it seems otherwise sometimes, with coaches Doc Rivers, Stan Van Gundy and Alvin Gentry all fined by the league over the last week for criticizing officials.

Dallas coach Rick Carlisle, whose team was visited by McCutchen before playing the Knicks last week, said the respected referee can make things better, calling him a great ambassador and teacher.

"You could argue he was the top official in the game, but the job that he has taken on is a very important one because now he has a chance to impact so many other officials,"



BRANDON DILL/AP

Memphis Grizzlies players Chandler Parsons, left, Marc Gasol, center, and Zach Randolph, right, talk to referee Monty McCutchen during a game in Memphis, Tenn., last season. McCutchen left his job on the floor this year to become the league's vice president and head of referee development and training, and has been conducting respect-for-the-game sessions to create a stronger working relationship between players and officials.

Carlisle said. "And the other reason that he is a great person for this position is he's a great communicator. Always has been. He can carry the message to officials, he can help convey the message to players and coaches of the importance of constructive communication, how to diffuse the emotion in difficult situations."

Representatives of players and officials met during the All-Star break and McCutchen has taken the lead from there for the officiating. Like with any relationship that has struggled, he said repairs start with better

communication.

He praised veteran players who have spoken up in the sessions on behalf of their clubs, and believes the discussions will pay off, even if it isn't easy to see that right away.

"What I am sure of is that we are willing to do our work," McCutchen said. "We are willing to re-examine how we can better the game that we serve, and from that perspective that the players' commentary has received a reasonable ear from us. We hear you and we'll work on it."

MLB

Kingery shows Phils he's ready

Top prospect displaying versatility

BY ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

CLEARWATER, Fla. — Scott Kingery has shown the Philadelphia Phillies he's ready to play in the majors even if it takes a bit longer for him to get there.

Kingery is considered the top second-base prospect in baseball and already has been compared to Hall of Famer Craig Biggio and four-time All-Star Dustin Pedroia. But Cesar Hernandez is Philadelphia's starting second baseman, causing Kingery to play other positions in spring training.

He started at third base for the first time against Minnesota on Sunday and is working in the outfield.

"My thought process last year, knowing I was going to start the year in the minors, was to go out, have fun, give them a little bit of what I can do on the field and show them I can play up here and hold my own," Kingery said. "This year wasn't much different. I had a great spring last year and I wanted to do the same thing. Go out, have fun, prove what you can do every shot you step on the field."

Kingery entered Tuesday batting .378 (14-for-37) with two doubles and three homers.

"Beyond his talent, it's his work

ethic, his drive, his determination, how badly he wants it," manager Gabe Kapler said. "Every day he becomes more likable as a baseball player and as a man. His teammates love him and his coaching staff loves him and the organization is really impressed with the way he carries himself."

Kingery is slated to start the season at Triple-A Lehigh Valley because the Phillies would guarantee an extra year of team control through 2024 if he's not promoted before April 13.

Plus, there's no spot for him yet.

Hernandez has a .294 batting average and .372 on-base percentage over the past two seasons. He's earned the right to play regularly. Maikel Franco will begin the season at third but he has struggled the past two seasons despite decent power numbers: a .242 average, .292 on-base percentage and 49 homers. The Phillies have four starting outfielders for three spots but Kingery is joining the mix.

"The versatility to be able to play four, five different positions is great because if someone goes down or gets traded, you want to be able to fill that spot," Kingery said. "It's a really good thing."

Kingery has played second base throughout his career in the minors and is adjusting to mak-



JOHN RADUX/AL

The Philadelphia Phillies' Scott Kingery bats during a spring training game against the Tampa Bay Rays on March 13 in Clearwater, Fla. Kingery is considered the top second-base prospect in baseball and already has been compared to Craig Biggio and Dustin Pedroia. But Cesar Hernandez is Philadelphia's starting second baseman so Kingery has been playing other positions in spring training.

ing the throw from across the diamond at third base.

"It'll take a little getting used to the speed of the game, the runners, the clock in your mind, how much time you have to throw the ball to get the runner," he said.

Kingery was an outfielder his first two seasons in college at Arizona.

"In left and right, you have the tail off the bat and in center you

have better vision," he said. "I think it'll take some time getting used to it. The low line drives are toughest right now because you can't judge how high or where it's going to land."

Kingery hit .281 with five homers and 46 RBIs in 2016 at two levels of the minors. He began last season at Double-A Reading and finished at Triple-A, combining for a .304 average with 26

homers and 29 steals. He has the pop to bat third and the speed to lead off. He earned the nickname "Scotty Jetpacks" in college.

"If I have the ability to drive the ball in the gap and sneak a few out, that increases my ability to produce runs," Kingery said. "Obviously, as a guy known for speed, to get on base is my main priority and if I can drive guys in, that helps me more."

Rays' catchers using wristbands while rotating

BY JAKE SEINER
Associated Press

PORT CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Major League Baseball made game-calling more difficult for catchers this winter when it changed the rules governing mound visits. For backstops with the Tampa Bay Rays, things got even trickier when the club announced plans for a four-man rotation to open the season.

Pitching coach Kyle Snyder had an idea to help, and catchers Wilson Ramos and Jesus Sucre were eager to hop on board — quarterback-style wristbands loaded with information designed to help with pitch calling.

The Rays are joining the Indians, Mets and some others as teams arming their catchers with data-filled forearm sleeves. Tampa Bay hasn't decided precisely what will be on the wristbands, though it will mostly include information on signs and strategies for attacking opposing hitters. The cards will have a flap to make sure opponents and cameras can't catch what's been written down.



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Tampa Bay Rays catcher Jesus Sucre, left, pats pitcher Yonny Chirinos on the chest during a spring training game. The Rays are arming their catchers with quarterback-style wristbands in response to rule changes governing mound visits.

"If you have all that on the wristband, it's going to be a lot easier for you," Sucre said.

Catchers like David Ross, Evan Gattis and Yasmani Grandal have used the wrists to manage

primarily a response to a rule change limiting mound visits to six per game, a shift that makes the already complicated task of relaying pitch calls all the more challenging. Catchers can be barred from going to the mound if a team has exhausted its allotment, and they're not thrilled with the change — Martin Maldonado (Angels) and Willson Contreras (Cubs) have said they'd rather pad naves than limit their visits.

Teams use intricate sets of signs to disguise pitch selection when a potentially nosey baserunner is on second base, and not every pitcher employs the same systems.

The Rays used 30 pitchers last season, and each of them had at least two sets of signs for use with runners on base. There's some overlap, but it's still a lot for catchers to memorize — a major impetus for all the mound visits.

"I know there's a lot of pride that catchers take in their game-calling abilities," said Cash. "We're not looking to take that away from our two guys because we feel they both do a good job retaining information before a

series. But nice little quick reminders don't hurt anybody."

Cash thinks the most drastic change for catchers is in the number of pitchers.

Tampa Bay could use even more pitchers this year thanks to a strategy shift with starting pitchers. The team plans to use a four-man rotation while relying on the bullpen to cover games that would have gone to a fifth starter. That means the Rays will intentionally use six or seven pitchers in some games.

"It's kind of hard to go inning to inning to inning with a different guy," Sucre said. "You have to work hard."

As more teams try to limit the number of times starting pitchers face an opposing order, such games could become more common around the majors. Plus with last year's shift to a 10-day disabled list, there's more shuttling of arms between Triple-A and the majors, broadening the pool of pitchers that catchers will work with over the course of a season. Teams used a record 755 pitchers last season, compared to 666 in 2007 and 534 in 1997.

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Tampa Bay	73	50	19	4	104	264	205
x-Boston	72	45	17	10	100	240	186
Toronto	73	43	23	7	93	246	208
Washington	73	42	24	7	91	229	217
Pittsburgh	74	42	27	5	89	243	225
Columbus	74	42	28	5	87	210	206
Philadelphia	74	37	25	12	86	222	220
New Jersey	73	37	28	8	82	219	221
Florida	71	37	27	7	81	219	218
Carolina	73	31	31	11	73	197	232
N.Y. Rangers	73	32	33	8	72	211	236
N.Y. Islanders	71	32	32	10	72	235	263
Detroit	73	27	33	13	65	189	238
Montreal	74	26	36	12	64	185	237
Ottawa	72	26	35	11	63	189	251
Buffalo	73	23	38	12	58	173	240

Western Conference

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Nashville	72	48	14	10	106	236	178
x-Segoe	73	47	21	5	99	248	200
Winnipeg	73	44	19	10	98	242	190
San Jose	73	42	22	9	91	232	201
Minnesota	71	41	24	8	90	227	210
Colorado	73	40	25	8	88	236	210
Anaheim	74	38	24	12	88	210	197
Los Angeles	74	40	27	7	87	212	186

St. Louis 73 40 28 5 85 203 194
Dallas 74 38 28 8 84 212 201
Calgary 75 30 35 10 80 204 226
Edmonton 72 36 5 96 208 234
Chicago 74 30 35 9 69 209 228
Arizona 73 25 37 11 61 179 231
Vancouver 73 25 39 9 59 187 240

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

x-tilted playoff spot

Tuesday's games

Columbus at N.Y. Rangers 3
Washington 4, Dallas 3
N.Y. Islanders 4, Pittsburgh 1
Edmonton 1, Carolina 3
Florida 7, Ottawa 2
Detroit 5, Philadelphia 4, SO
Tampa Bay 4, Toronto 3
Winnipeg 6, Los Angeles 1, OT
Vegas 5, Chicago 1

Wednesday's games

Pittsburgh at Montreal 3
Arizona 4, Buffalo 1
Boston 3, Tampa Bay 1
Anaheim 4, Calgary 0

Thursday's games

N.Y. Rangers at Philadelphia
Florida at Carolina
Tampa Bay at N.Y. Islanders
Edmonton at Detroit
Toronto at Nashville
Chicago at Pittsburgh
Los Angeles at Colorado

Friday's games

Tampa Bay at Pittsburgh
Anaheim at Winnipeg
Vancouver at St. Louis
Boston at Dallas

Saturday's games

Vegas at Colorado
Calgary at San Jose
Vegas at N.Y. Islanders
Buffalo at N.Y. Rangers
Detroit at Toronto
Arizona at Florida
Tampa Bay at New Jersey
Washington at Montreal
Carolina at Ottawa
St. Louis at Columbus
Nashville at Minnesota
Los Angeles at Edmonton

Sunday's games

Philadelphia at Pittsburgh
Nashville at Winnipeg
Vancouver at Dallas
Boston at Minnesota
Anaheim at Edmonton

Leaders

Goal scoring

Name, Team
Alex Ovechkin, Washington 73 44
Patrick Kane, Winnipeg 73 43
Evgeny Malkin, Pittsburgh 73 40
William Karlsson, Vegas 73 39
Tyler Seguin, Dallas 73 39
Nathan MacKinnon, Colorado 73 38
Eric Staal, Minnesota 73 37
Anders Lee, N.Y. Islanders 73 36
Zdeno Chara, Boston 73 34
James van Riemsdyk, Toronto 72 33
Taylor Hall, New Jersey 68 32
Nathan MacKinnon, Colorado 68 32
Brad Marchand, Boston 58 31
Sean Monahan, Calgary 58 31
Rickard Rakell, Anaheim 69 31
Logan Couture, San Jose 69 30

Plus/Minus

Name, Team
Alex Ovechkin, Vegas 73 40
Ryan Kessel, Vegas 70 32
Bryan Marchessault, Vegas 70 32
Yanni Gourde, Tampa Bay 70 30
Nathan MacKinnon, Colorado 69 32
Patrick Nemeth, Colorado 59 28
Sean Couture, Philadelphia 74 27
Victor Olofinboba, Tampa Bay 73 27
Josh Anderson, Anaheim 65 26
Dustin Brown, Los Angeles 73 26
Christie Brown, Boston 68 26
Clayton Kacik, Boston 59 26
Ryan Ellis, Nashville 74 25
Steven Stamkos, Tampa Bay 75 25
Steven Stamkos, Tampa Bay 75 25
Jonas Brodin, Minnesota 64 24

Around the league

Division has teams playoff-ready

Grueling Metropolitan most competitive of all

By STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press

The bruises on Travis Konecny's legs are marks of Metropolitan Division hockey.

In the third period of a crucial late-season divisional game, the undersized Philadelphia Flyers forward got in the way of not one but two slap shots from Washington Capitals defencemen. The two points from the victory made it all feel better.

"It's that time of year when those shots are crucial to make sure they're not getting to your goaltender," Konecny said. "I have a feeling that's the way the game is going to feel from here on out."

Konecny's not the only one feeling it down the stretch in a division where the top five teams are separated by just nine points with two and a half weeks remaining in the season — and they could all make the playoffs.

Washington, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Columbus and New Jersey play six more games against each other down the stretch, too. A postseason with Metropolitan first- and second-round series is sure to bring knock-out, drag-out showdowns with not much separating these teams.

"It kind of depends on the timing of when you play each other," Flyers defenceman Andrew MacDonald said. "Obviously you want to finish strong and have a good finish to the season."

With the Florida Panthers 11-2-1 in their past 14 games, all the contending Metro teams save for the Capitals and Penguins can't even feel safe. It's why Philadelphia captain Claude Giroux said, "Right now we're just trying to get into the playoffs."

That kind of desperation has paid off for the streaking Blue Jackets, who have won nine in a row to solidify themselves. Five of those victories have come against teams currently in playoff position.

Briefs

Goaltenders battling physical, mental fatigue

Associated Press

Behind the mask is a mind filled with a web of a thousand thoughts, worries and a singular focus of what it takes to win a game.

Then the next game, and the one after that.

"There is no shut-off for a goaltender," retired goalie Brian Boucher said. "The mind doesn't shut off."

A starting NHL goaltender bears a burden unlike any position in hockey and few others in sports, and the resulting pressure builds up over the course of a season. By this time of year, with the playoffs on the horizon, No. 1 goalies who have grinded through almost six months of work must battle fatigue that threatens to derail their team's hopes.

Andreï Vasilevsky of the Tampa Bay Lightning is going through it for the first time, and the 2016 Vezina Trophy-winner Braden Holtby of the Washington Capitals is used to it by now. Goaltenders of all ages have no choice but to manage the physical and mental hurdles.

It's worse for the goalies who can't take nights off because their teams can't afford to start a backup. Boucher started the final 13



DERIK HAMILTON/AP

The Washington Capitals' T.J. Oshie, left, fights the Flyers' Travis Konecny during the third period on March 18 in Philadelphia. A tight race among contenders in the Metropolitan Division should have the top five teams battle-tested and playoff-ready.

Teams can lose three of seven playoff games and stay alive. That might not be the case the rest of the regular season for the Blue Jackets, Devils and Flyers, and it's no sure bet the Capitals will win the division for the third consecutive year.

Jones-ing

Columbus is a serious playoff threat in large part because of Seth Jones' development into a do-it-all, 1 defenseman at age 23. Jones leads the Blue Jackets in ice time at 24:47 per night and is second on the team with 35 assists and 49 points.

Did you know?

Ottawa defenseman Patrick Seloff is the first player in NHL history to score a goal in each of his first two career games while playing for different teams. His first goal was April 9, 2016 with Calgary and his second came Tuesday against Florida.

Game of the week

The NHL-leading Nashville Predators visit the Winnipeg Jets on Sunday night for a final meeting before what could be a preview of a Central Division second-round series.

Carlson in line for big contract

John Carlson can't forget that he is fighting for the NHL lead for points among defensemen because his Washington Capitals teammates keep razzing him about it.

"The guys do a good job of pumping that up in the locker room," Carlson said.

Carlson's 61 points have him tied with the Dallas Stars' John Klingberg, and he is a dark horse candidate for the Norris Trophy as the league's top defenseman.

This breakout season with a career-high 15 goals and 46 assists is coming at a perfect time for Carlson, who is set to be an unrestricted free agent this summer but has been flying under the radar compared to New York Islanders captain John Tavares. Carlson could command upward of \$7 million per season on a deal that's almost certain to be eight years if Washington re-signs him or seven if he hits the market July 1.

GMs call for interference change

Coach's challenges for goaltender interference and the ensuing arguments aren't going away.

There will just be a new place to direct the complaints.

With the goal of refining the consistency of goalie interference challenges, NHL general managers on Wednesday recommended shifting the decision from on-ice officials to the league's situation room in Toronto. The change could go into effect as soon as the playoffs, which begin April 11, after the NHL Players' Association signed off and now just needs approval from the board of governors.

Commissioner Gary Bettman said only

NFL/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

NFL looks to review catch rule

By Barry Wilner
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — The NFL's catch rule would get less complicated if team owners approve recommendations from the powerful competition committee.

One of the first orders of business when the league's annual meetings begin Monday in Orlando, Fla., will be a proposal by the committee to clarify what is a catch. Commissioner Roger Goodell said during the week of the Super Bowl he would urge simplification of the rule.

"Catch/no catch is at the top of everyone's minds," Troy Vincent, the NFL's football operations chief, said Wednesday before outlining the committee's recommendations.

The owners will be asked to vote on clarifications that eliminate parts of the rule involving a receiver going to the ground, and that also eliminate negating a catch for slight movement of the ball while it is in the receiver's possession. No calls in the last few years — not even pass interference — have caused more consternation than overturned catches in key situations, including those by Dez Bryant, Jesse James and Austin Seferian-Jenkins.

"We were at the point as far as players and particularly coaches who asked, 'Why is that not a catch?'" Vincent said. "We talked to fans, coaches and players and we asked the groups, 'Would you like this to be a catch?' It was 100 percent yes."

"Then we began writing rules that actually apply to making these situations catches."

Here's what would constitute a catch if the owners approve the competition committee's alterations:

- control of the ball;
- getting two feet down;
- performing a football act or;
- performing a third step.

The stipulation that slight movement of the ball while the receiver still has control no longer would result in an incompletion. Vincent pointed to the touchdown catch by the Philadelphia Eagles' Corey Clement in the Super Bowl as an example of a player never losing possession of the ball despite slight movement.

"That's what the fans, coaches and players want," Vincent said. "They are the magical moments people are looking for, and that includes all of those [plays]. It's the biggest [proposed] change. Why we want this is this is one call shaping results across the sport."

Competition committee members are chairman Rich McKay, president of the Falcons; Broncos general manager John Elway; Cowboys COO Stephen Jones; Giants owner John Mara; Packers President Mark Murphy; Ravens GM Ozzie Newsome; Saints coach Sean Payton and Steelers coach Mike Tomlin.



GENE L. PUSKAS/AP

Rhode Island head coach Dan Hurley agreed to lead the UConn men's team after a 28-6 season with the Rams, who made the NCAA Tournament for the second-straight year.

By Pat Eaton-Robb
Associated Press

STORRS, Conn. — Rhode Island's Dan Hurley agreed to become UConn's coach, joining a team that is under NCAA investigation and fired Kevin Ollie this month after another losing season.

"It's official! Dan Hurley named Head Coach of UConn mens basketball," UConn said on Twitter on Thursday.

The school said details of the agreement would be released later. A news conference is expected Friday.

Hurley was 113-82 in six seasons with the Rams, who went 26-8 this year before losing in the second round of the NCAA Tournament to Duke. It was the second straight trip to the tournament for the Rams, who won their

first regular-season Atlantic-10 championship.

The 45-year-old Hurley played at Seton Hall during its Big East rivalry with UConn in the 1990s. He is the son of Hall of Fame high school coach Bob Hurley Sr. and the brother of Arizona State coach Bob Hurley.

Before taking over at Rhode Island, Hurley coached for two seasons at Wagner and led the school to 25 wins in 2011-12. He also was considered a leading candidate for the vacant coaching job at of Pittsburgh.

UConn won its fourth national championship in 2014 but has fallen on hard times recently. The Huskies went 14-18 this year and 16-17 in 2016-17 after going 30 years without a losing season.

The program also is under an NCAA investigating amid allegations of recruiting violations and

reports that team members may have participated in impermissible workouts before the season.

UConn is trying to terminate Ollie's contract "with cause," which would save the school from having to pay the more than \$10 million left on the five year deal that expires in 2021.

Ollie has said he will fight that decision and a hearing involving him, his union and the school is expected to be held this week.

It's not clear how many players from UConn's team plan to return next season.

Terry Larrier, a transfer from Virginia Commonwealth with another year of eligibility remaining, has announced he will turn pro. The Huskies also said this week they were releasing their top recruit, guard James Akinjo from Richmond, Calif., from his commitment to the school.

UConn hires Danny Hurley

Post players may be key to Final Four

By Doug Feinberg
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Reaching the women's Final Four and winning a national championship may come down to play in the post.

Even as basketball has gone away from traditional position players, trending toward more versatile talents, there are plenty of dominant post players left in the NCAA Tournament. Teaira McCowan, Azura Stevens, A'ja Wilson or Kalani Brown could be a big reason why one of their teams cuts down the nets celebrating a national championship in Columbus, Ohio.

All four are finalists for the Lisa Leslie Award and have helped their teams reach the Sweet 16, which begins Friday. The quartet spent some time together this summer at the USA Basketball Under-23 camp, doing drills, competing in scrimmages and bonding.

"It was fun just going talent against talent — comparing their style of play with my style," said the 6-foot-7 McCowan, who has been instrumental in Mississippi State's success over the past few years. "Being taller players, you don't go against size every night, so you have to figure out how you need to play and what you need to do in order to be successful."

They carried over the camp experience to their play this season. Wilson, who helped South Carolina win a national championship last year, was named SEC player of the year for a record third time this month. Brown was the Big 12 Player of the Year for Baylor, and UConn's Stevens earned MVP honors of the American Athletic Conference Tournament despite coming off the bench.

McCowan was a huge reason that the Bulldogs were able to end UConn's 111-game winning streak last year in the Final Four and reach the title game. The Huskies simply had no answer for her size.

"She not only cleans up our mess on offense, but she's also the aircraft carrier that protects the rim on defense," Mississippi State coach Vic Schaefer said. "She may not block the shot, but she'll alter it or somebody just may look up and say, 'No, I'm not going in there.'"

UConn has its own rim protector now in the 6-foot-6 Stevens. She had to sit out last season after transferring from Duke.

"I try to bring a post presence, defensively, offensively," she said. "I want to bring that altering, blocking shots, getting in passing lanes and rebounding as well."

Baylor coach Kim Mulkey has a pair of talented post players in Brown, who is 6-foot-7,



SEAN RAYFORD/AP

South Carolina forward A'ja Wilson drives to the hoop during an NCAA Tournament game. Even as basketball has gone away from tradition position players trending towards more versatile talents, there is a plethora of dominant post players like Wilson — the likely No. 1 WNBA Draft pick — leaving their mark in the women's NCAA Tournament.

and Lauren Cox, who is 6-foot-4. The duo, referred to as "Double Trouble" by Stanford coach Tara VanDerveer, makes life difficult for opposing teams and coaches.

"They are incredible. Lauren Cox, Kalani, a monster inside, but Lauren is a monster inside, point guard mentality outside where she's such a great passer, shoots the jumper so well. Incredibly difficult matchup," said Michigan coach Kim Barnes Arico, whose team lost to the Lady Bears in the second round.

Mulkey is no stranger to having extraordinary post players. She coached Brittney Griner — the most dominant big in NCAA history — a few years back.

"What has happened, and you see it in the NBA, is you don't have the big, big man hard anymore," she said. "Everybody wants to

Scoreboard

Women's NCAA Tournament

ALBANY REGIONAL
Albany, N.Y.
Regional Semifinals
Saturday, March 24
South Carolina (26-8) vs. Buffalo (25-5)
UConn (34-0) vs. Duke (24-8)
Regional Championship
Monday, March 26

Semifinal winners

SPOKANE REGIONAL
At Spokane, Wash.
Regional Semifinals
Saturday, March 24
Notre Dame (31-3) vs. Texas A&M (26-9)
Oregon (32-4) vs. Central Michigan (30-4)
Regional Championship
Monday, March 26

Semifinal winners

KANSAS CITY REGIONAL
At Kansas City, Mo.
Regional Semifinals
Friday, March 23
N.C. State (26-8) vs. Mississippi State (34-1)
UCLA (26-7) vs. Texas (28-6)
Regional Championship
Sunday, March 25

Semifinal winners

LEXINGTON REGIONAL
At Lexington, Ky.
Regional Semifinals
Friday, March 23
Oregon State (22-7) vs. Baylor (33-1)
Louisville (34-2) vs. Stanford (24-10)
Regional Championship
Sunday, March 25

Semifinal winners

FINAL FOUR
At Columbus, Ohio
National Semifinals
Friday, March 30
Albany champion vs. Stanford champion
Kansas City champion vs. Lexington champion
National Championship
Saturday, April 1

Semifinal winners

shoot the three, everybody wants to spread the floor. We figured out all those motion offenses. That's very good. But I guarantee you, if a Wilt Chamberlain walked through that door that could dominate the paint, it would change their approach. You have to change with the personnel that you have."

While Wilson is expected to go first in the WNBA draft this year, McCowan, Stevens and Brown all have another year left in college. McCowan and Stevens are eligible to enter the draft this year, but both plan on returning for their final collegiate seasons, leaving WNBA coaches in need of a post player excited for next year's draft.

"Next year you'll have between five and seven post players in the first 15 picks, including maybe five of the first seven," Washington Mystics coach and GM Mike Thibault said. "It's going to make for a pretty deep draft at that position."

NCAA TOURNAMENT



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

Purdue forward Vincent Edwards, right, has a family legacy of basketball. His father, Bill, played professionally in Europe. His mom, Glennetta, played in college and coached one of Vincent's youth teams. Two older brothers also played for Division I teams.

Family connection

Purdue F Edwards' versatility boosted by hoops background

BY MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Purdue's Vincent Edwards never had a choice when it came to playing basketball.

It was in his blood.

His father, Bill, played professionally in Europe for more than a decade. His mother, Glennetta Patton, played in college and helped coach one of Edwards' youth teams. His older brothers, Bill Jr. and Darius, played Division I ball and even today, family get-togethers sometimes consist of pick-up games at a gym in his hometown of Middletown, Ohio.

All the competition, the jawing, the instruction and the good-natured ribbing from parents and siblings alike taught Edwards what he needed to do to become a success on the court.

"They bullied me, they roughed me up, they pushed me physically and mentally and my mom did it, too," he said. "But my parents taught me that if you could do a lot of things, it would be hard to keep you off the floor. I just always wanted to play."

Getting Edwards off the court seems to be getting harder by the day.

He's a serious gym rat by nature and a fan of the game. He knows the history of the sport and his father's legacy as Wright State's career scoring and rebounding leader.

For now, the Boilermakers' senior forward owns family bragging rights.

He's appeared in and won more NCAA Tournament games than everyone else combined. He's the only one to reach the Sweet 16 — and he's heading back for the second straight year. He's the

lone family member with a shiny conference championship ring from a power-five league, and he began this season as the only active college player in America with at least 1,000 career points, 500 rebounds, 300 assists and 100 three-pointers.

Ask anyone around West Lafayette and they'll explain this record-breaking season might not have been possible without him or his versatility.

And even his teammates know Vincent Edwards couldn't have made it with the support and the challenges he faced growing up in a basketball household.

"I know his family pretty well and they care for him and push him," point guard P.J. Thompson said. "They know his potential and how good he can be."

The pushing didn't just come from inside the household.

He also wanted to live up to the reputation of Middletown High School, which has produced former Hall of Fame basketball player Jerry Lucas, 1967 Masters champion Gay Brewer, NFL Hall of Famer Cris Carter and Carter's older brother, Butch, who played and coached in the NBA after playing at Indiana and beating Purdue on a last-second shot in the 1979 NIT title game.

All the pressures — and the sibling rivalries — forced Edwards to view the game differently than most.

"Knowing my dad and brothers, that's why I started on other things in my game, the little things," he said. "That's how my versatility came about."

Now even as his college career winds down and the possibility of a pro career beckons, Edwards is still focused on the tasks at hand.

After breaking the school's

single-season record for wins last weekend, the second-seeded Boilermakers (30-6) can reach their first regional semifinal game since 2000 by beating third-seeded Texas Tech (26-9) in Boston. Two wins would send Purdue to its first Final Four since 1980, and three wins would allow Edwards' senior class to tie Purdue's record for most wins over a four-year period (107).

To accomplish any of it without 7-foot-2, 290-pound center Isaac Haas, who is likely to miss the rest of the season with a fractured right elbow, the Boilermakers may need Edwards to do even more than usual.

In Sunday's second-round 76-73 win over Butler, the 6-foot-8, 225-pound Edwards scored a team high 20 points, grabbed four rebounds, had two assists, one block and went 6-for-8 from the field, including 5-for-6 from the free-throw line despite picking up three fouls in the first half and playing 27 minutes.

"He can do everything," senior guard Dakota Mathias said. "When he had a smaller guy on him (Sunday), he posted up. Against a bigger guy, he spread them out. He just gives you so many options."

Yes, he's a product of a basketball family, an athletic school and has all the milestones a player could want. But when he returns home for his senior year, Edwards will sit around the dinner table and talk about something he cherishes even more than basketball.

"Middletown is a place where not a lot of people make it," he said. "So to leave here with a college degree and four years of playing basketball is something a lot of people in town can't say and is something I'm really proud of."

Pair of freshmen give Texas Tech boost into Sweet 16

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS
Associated Press

DALLAS — Jarrett Culver grew up close to the Texas Tech campus with basketball dreams to play somewhere else.

"I had dreams about going other places, and bigger places, stuff like that," Culver said.

Now he is going to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament as a freshman guard on his hometown team.

Culver and Zhaire Smith, whose 360-degree alley-oop dunk is already one of the highlights of this year's tourney, are the highest-scoring freshman duo in Texas Tech history.

"On the first day or the second day he got the job, he offered me, so I felt like that spoke volumes to me," Culver said of second-year coach Chris Beard. "Even though I'm a homegrown Lubbock person, he just recruited me hard and stayed on me, and wanted me bad. The things that he was saying about the culture he's building and stuff, I felt like that would be good, and I felt like this was the best fit."

Texas Tech (26-9) is in the Sweet 16 for the first time since 2005, when Culver was

only 6 years old and Beard was an assistant coach there for Bobby Knight. The Red Raiders play Purdue (30-6) in an East Region semifinal game Friday night in Boston.

Martin Zeno holds the school's freshman scoring record with 413 points in 2004-05 as part of Tech's last Sweet 16 team. Culver (402 points) and Smith (397) are now 2-3 on that list for the Big 12 runner-up that reached a program-best No. 6 ranking in the AP poll in February.

"That's just being able to play on big stages like this is great," Tech's All-Big 12 senior guard Keenan Evans said. "I didn't go to the tournament my freshman year, I wasn't on a ranked team my freshman year, and I don't know how I would have handled that. So it's definitely good for them to learn that this early on."

Smith had 10 points and eight rebounds in Tech's NCAA opener, a win over Stephen F. Austin during which he made a 360-degree spin in the air on an alley-oop from Evans. They connected on another alley-oop when Smith added 18 points, nine rebounds and seven assists in their second-round win over Florida.

"Their freshmen, where do they come

from? My goodness, the years that they've had. Their freshman class is big-time," Florida coach Mike White said. "They've got a good mix of those guys, along with Keenan and some older guys, some good seniors."

Evans is one of five seniors on what is a unique roster for Beard and the Red Raiders. Culver and Smith are among six freshmen that include Davide Moretti, a play-making guard from Italy who has also played in every game this season.

Smith is from Garland, Texas, just outside of Dallas, and already knew Culver from basketball camps through the years. While Culver's decision to stay in Lubbock helped sway him to go to Tech, Smith really felt good about what Beard wanted to do.

"I just trusted him and I believe in his process," Smith said. "He's real trustworthy. He said they've got five seniors and us freshmen can come up and play a lot of minutes."

Culver, who had gone to only a few Texas Tech games growing up, said Beard "just put everything on the table" and was honest when they first met.

Former coach Tubby Smith had already

‘Their freshmen, where do they come from? My goodness, the years that they’ve had. Their freshman class is big-time.’

Mike White

Florida coach after losing to Texas Tech

been recruiting Culver to stay in Lubbock before Beard took the job two years ago. Beard almost immediately made the 6-foot-5 guard from Coronado High, less than a 10-minute drive from the Tech campus, his top priority in recruiting.

"Whenever you have some success and you look back at the story, you've had some breaks along the way," Beard said. "We've had two or three really good breaks since we got here. At the top of that list is Jarrett Culver being here in Lubbock... We would recruit Jarrett if he was in San Diego, or New York City, or Italy. We have that high opinion of him."

NCAA TOURNAMENT



KEITH SRANKOIC/AP

Duke's Grayson Allen dunks against Iowa during the NCAA tournament first-round game last Thursday in Pittsburgh.

Most: Allen has grown into leadership role

FROM BACK PAGE

He can certainly draw upon plenty of the experiences — good and bad — of his previous three years.

His hustle plays against Wisconsin in the 2015 national championship game sparked Duke to its most recent NCAA title. During the following two seasons, though, his name became synonymous with three separate tripping incidents that earned him a flagrant foul, a reprimand from the Atlantic Coast Conference and a one-game suspension.

Aside from his hip-check foul on North Carolina's Garrison Brooks two weeks ago in the ACC Tournament — an incident later laughed off by the Tar Heels — Allen's senior season has been generally devoid of any controversy.

Instead, the focus has been on his production on the court and his leadership off it. Allen is the team's second-leading scorer at 15.6 points per game.

And though leadership skills are tougher to quantify, Krzyzewski offered an anecdote: He said he and Allen were among the last people out of the locker room following the second-round victory over Rhode Island, and the Hall of Fame coach told him that he noticed the rest of the Blue Devils listening to him.

"And he smiled. 'Your team is really listening to you,'" Krzyzewski told Allen. "'Keep saying what you think you should say.' And you could see he was proud of it. ... He's telling people what to do, and it was really neat to see when he's at right now."

Allen said his teammates are developing leadership habits of their own, and the cumulative effect has been a group sense of ownership of the team. Duke has won nine of 11 games and beat Iowa and Rhode Island by 20 points apiece.

"I think it's clear to anybody who's seen us play ... that we're really come together, and so they're not only listening to, and so they're listening to each other," Allen said. "There's a lot of back and forth going on between guys, and we're really embracing the group, team mentality and it's a really cool thing."

Scoreboard

EAST REGIONAL

At Boston

Regional Semifinals

Friday, March 23

Villanova (32-4) vs. West Virginia (26-10) **AFN-Sports2**: 12:15 a.m. Saturday CET, 8:15 a.m. Saturday JKT

Purdue (30-6) vs. Texas Tech (26-9) **AFN-Sports2**: 2:45 a.m. Saturday CET, 10:45 a.m. Saturday JKT

Regional Championship

Sunday, March 25

Semifinal winners

SOUTH REGIONAL

At Atlanta

Regional Semifinals

Thursday, March 22

Nevada (29-7) vs. Loyola of Chicago (30-5) **AFN-Sports**: 8 a.m. Friday JKT

Kansas State (24-11) vs. Kentucky (26-10) **AFN-Sports**: 10:30 a.m. Friday JKT

Regional Championship

Saturday, March 24

Semifinal winners

MIDWEST REGIONAL

At Omaha, Neb.

Regional Semifinals

Friday, March 23

Kansas (29-7) vs. Clemson (25-9) **AFN-Sports**: midnight Friday CET, 8 a.m. Saturday JKT

Duke (28-7) vs. Syracuse (23-13) **AFN-Sports**: 2:30 a.m. Saturday CET, 10:30 a.m. Saturday JKT

Regional Championship

Sunday, March 25

Semifinal winners

WEST REGIONAL

At Los Angeles

Regional Semifinals

Thursday, March 22

Texas A&M (22-12) vs. Michigan (30-7) **AFN-Sports2**: 8:15 a.m. Friday JKT

Florida State (22-11) vs. Gonzaga (32-4) **AFN-Sports2**: 10:45 a.m. Friday JKT

Regional Championship

Saturday, March 24

Semifinal winners

FINAL FOUR

At The Alamodome

San Antonio

National Semifinals

Saturday, March 31

South champion vs. West champion

East champion vs. Midwest champion

National Championship

Monday, April 2

Semifinal winners

Duke, Kentucky freshmen unafraid of tourney stage

BY JOEDY MCCREARY

Associated Press

DURHAM, N.C. — Duke and Kentucky are viewed as the masters of the one-and-done era, winning championships with remarkably young rosters.

Both programs have a chance to do it again. After several potential one-and-done phenoms were bounced from the NCAA Tournament in the opening weekend, the Blue Devils and Wildcats are the teams still playing that have rosters stacked with high-profile freshmen.

Duke, the No. 2 seed in the Midwest Regional, starts four freshmen — led by Wooden Award finalist Marvin Bagley III — while Kentucky, the South's No. 5 seed, features Kevin Knox as its centerpiece.

The Wildcats (26-10) played ninth-seeded Kansas State on Thursday in Atlanta. Duke (28-7) faces 11th-seeded Syracuse in Omaha, Neb., on Friday.

Hall of Fame Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said his freshmen are "not afraid of the moment. It's how much preparation do they have for the moment?"

"We're trying to condense about four years into eight months," he said. "I don't know how it's going to turn out. You just kind of live it."

Among the star freshmen who didn't make it to the tournament's second weekend were Arizona's Deandre Ayton, Oklahoma's Trae Young, Missouri's Michael Porter Jr., Michigan State's Jaren Jackson, Alabama's Collin Sexton and Texas' Mohamed Bamba.



Bagley III



Knox

Ayton, Young and Bamba have already declared for the NBA Draft.

The Blue Devils have three players — Bagley, Wendell Carter Jr. and point guard Trevon Duval — in the top seven members of the 2017 recruiting class, according to 247Sports. The fourth freshman, Gary Trent Jr., was rated No. 17 by the service.

The highest-rated members of Kentucky's class — Hamidou Diallo, Knox and Jarred Vanderbilt — were ranked 10th-12th by 247Sports. No other top-20 ranked players are still playing.

Calipari has said his group "needed to fail as a team" to figure out how to win. In January the Wildcats dropped out of the Top 25 for the first time since 2014, then in February lost four in a row. But Kentucky enters the Sweet 16 on a five-game winning streak and is the highest remaining seed in the South.

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NCAA TOURNAMENT



GREGORY BULL/AP

Players on the Clemson bench react during the second half of the team's second-round NCAA Tournament game against Auburn.

Tigers aim high against Jayhawks

By PETE IACOBELLI
Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — The formula for Clemson's run to the Sweet 16 is simple: when the Tigers hit shots, they're difficult to beat.

Clemson (25-9) has made plenty of baskets in its past two NCAA Tournament games to advance to its first Sweet 16 in 21 years. The Tigers will try to shoot their way into the Elite Eight when they take on No. 1 seed Kansas (29-7) in the Midwest Regional in Omaha, Neb., on Friday.

Don't count the fifth-seeded Tigers out, either, if they play like they did in defeating New Mexico State (79-68) and fourth-seeded Southeastern Conference champion Auburn (84-53).

"Why not more?" Clemson coach Brad Brownell said Tuesday. Clemson hit better than 50 percent of its attempts (62-for-120) last weekend. Senior guard Gabe DeVoe went 18-for-33 in those games, earning the nickname "Bobby Buckets" on social media for his output.

"I started hunting shots," said DeVoe, perhaps better known until now as the "mini-me" version of Tigers defensive tackle Christian Wilkins for their similar beards and hairstyles. "It's a zone you get into."

Clemson's been in the zone this season for quite some time.

Brownell had made the NAAs his first season in 2010-11, then missed the tournament the next six seasons.

Before this season, he took the team overseas for an exhibition tour to Spain. The Tigers were at their Barcelona hotel in August when a fatal terror attack took place just outside when a van drove into pedestrians, killing 14 people and wounding at least 130 others.

No one in Clemson's party was hurt. Brownell believes it brought the players closer, something essential during their run to the school's fourth-ever trip to the round of 16.

"When we got back from Spain, I had no doubt about this team's spirit," the coach said.

Of course it doesn't hurt when Clemson is making shots.

The Tigers, picked for 13th

in the Atlantic Coast Conference last October, had long been known a defensive powerhouse that could not keep up with most teams on offense. But Clemson has shot .457 this season (seventh best in the ACC and tops in Brownell's eight seasons) while maintaining its defensive tenacity (third in ACC in points allowed).

The Tigers used their shooting to build a big halftime lead on North Carolina, then called on defense to make several big second-half stops when the Tar Heels tied the game for an 82-78 victory Jan. 30 to snap a 10-game losing streak to the last year's national champions.

A season ago, Clemson was snakebit in the ACC as it was 2-8 in games decided by five points or less. This year's team has turned things around to go 4-2 in close games.

Brownell said it took time to get his transfer starters from 2016-17 — guards Shelton Mitchell from Vanderbilt and Marquise Reed of Robert Morris, and forward Elijah Thomas of Texas A&M — up to speed on playing the defense the coach demanded. The Tigers have bought into that this season.

"There are some years when your team, when the pieces just fit," Brownell said.

College basketball is still buzzing about the beatdown Clemson put on Auburn.

Clemson led 43-19 at the half and eventually was up 41 points on the way to the round of 16. DeVoe remembers looking up at the scoreboard during one timeout and shaking his head at the blowout margin. He was even happier when told his team had gotten 15 straight stops against Auburn to turn the expected close game into a runaway.

"We have to stay locked on defense," DeVoe said.

Especially Friday for the Tigers' first-ever meeting with Kansas, the Big 12 Conference champion and one of the remaining NCAA Tournament favorites.

Still, no one at Clemson is conceding a thing to the high-powered Jayhawks.

"I think better days are coming for Clemson basketball," DeVoe said. "And this is the first step."

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The only thing Bill Self seemed pleased about from a first-round NCAA Tournament win by Kansas was, well, the fact that his top-seeded Jayhawks had won.

He wasn't a whole lot more impressed with their second-round win.

But in a tournament game goofy with upsets, where two No. 1 seeds are already out, simply surviving should be reason for applause. And the fact that Self thinks the best is yet to come should give the Jayhawks confidence as they head to the Midwest Region semifinals.

"Well, I think in the NCAA Tournament you don't worry as much if you played well or if you played poor," Self said. "You worry more about, 'Did we advance?' And I think that's all we did is we advanced."

Kansas will play red-hot Clemson on Friday night in Omaha, Nebraska.

"I don't think we were good against Penn, except for short stretches, and I don't think we were very good (against Seton Hall), except for short stretches," Self said. "But we put ourselves in position where hopefully we'll play much better next week and play our best ball. Certainly we're going to have to be better, obviously, on Friday."

It would help the Jayhawks' cause if Udoka Azubuike is closer to 100 percent against the Tigers.

The 7-foot sophomore played 22 minutes against Seton Hall, and the Jayhawks needed all of them

against Pirates big man Angel Delgado. But while Azubuike was effective after missing most of two weeks with a ligament injury to his left knee, there were still times that he was laboring.

"He's probably not close to 100 percent, to be honest, but the way his attitude has been, the way he's been rehabbing, that allowed him to get out there," Kansas star Devonte Graham said. "You can't duplicate having 'Duke in the game. He's a big piece of our offense.'"

Now, Azubuike will have another week to get his feet — or rather his knee — under him.

Self said the plan was to rest him Sunday and Monday, practice Tuesday through Thursday, and be ready to go against fifth-seeded Clemson team that ran roughshod over No. 4 seed Auburn.

"Coach is trying to limit my time sometimes, and I'm like, 'Coach, I'm good. I'm good to go,'" Azubuike said with a smile. "I'm feeling good right now. I feel good to be back with the team. And like, as soon as I stepped on the court, I felt good and I was just good to go."

Still, the Jayhawks (29-7) have only had one person step up offensively each of their first two NCAA Tournament games, and that's cause for concern. When they've struggled this season, such as losses to Washington and Arizona State, nobody in their talented backcourt came through in the clutch.

Against Penn, it was Graham who shouldered the load. He scored 29 points, dished out six

assists with six rebounds, and played all but one minute in a game fight until the second half.

Against Seton Hall, the Big 12 player of the year was largely silenced, perhaps in part by a shot to the head he took from his own teammate. But sophomore Malik Newman took over, the Big 12 Tournament's most valuable player hitting four three-pointers and pouring in 28 points in an 83-79 victory.

"With the four guards and with the big man, I think anybody — any one of our starting five — always have a chance to go out and get 20-plus," Newman said. "Lot of weapons we have to our arsenal."

They'll likely need more than one of them Friday night.

Clemson closed the first half against Auburn with a 25-4 run, was lights-out on offense, and brutal on defense, and was never threatened the rest of the way in an 84-53 romp that sent coach Brad Brownell's program to its first Sweet 16 in 21 years.

"That was probably as impressive of a performance as anyone has had in the tournament so far and there have been some great performances," Self said. "They dominated Auburn in every area — perimeter play, speed, rebounding and in the paint. Watching them was like watching a clinic."

"They've played against some unbelievable teams all year long," he added. "This will be a difficult game, a game that will require us to play a lot better than we did this past weekend."



ORLIN WAGNER/AP

Kansas center Udoka Azubuike, left, rebounds against Seton Hall forward Michael Nzei during the second half of a second-round game in the NCAA Tournament on Saturday in Wichita, Kan.

SPORTS



Just good enough

Jayhawks looking to find stride in Midwest Regional semis » Page 63

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Elder statesman

Duke's Allen making most of final NCAA Tournament

By JOEDY MCCREARY
Associated Press

GRAYSON Allen wants to make the most of his final run through the NCAA Tournament.

It hasn't exactly been a smooth four years for the Duke senior who won a national title in 2015 before becoming one of the sport's most polarizing figures amid a series of tripping incidents.

But he's evolved into the elder statesman on a team full of freshmen, and he has No. 2 seed Duke (28-7) preparing for a rematch with 11th-seeded Syracuse (23-13) on Friday night in Omaha, Neb., in the Midwest Regional semifinals.

"There's obviously no way I'm going to

'There's obviously no way I'm going to hold any words back or anything like that, and I think it really helps with this team.'

Grayson Allen
Duke senior

hold any words back or anything like that," Allen said Tuesday. "And I think it really helps with this team.

"It speaks to the maturity level of our team, and everyone's secure in their role," he added. "Me, by being that secure leader

and telling these guys and them either following or becoming a leader in their own right. ... Everyone is speaking up right now and it helps with our togetherness."

Part of his willingness to speak up, of course, is because this is his last shot at a national championship. But it's also a reflection of how he has grown more comfortable in leading through not just action but by words.

"He's just grown into being a leader," coach Mike Krzyzewski said. "He's not a vocal guy, so just learning about that and still playing his game, it's an evolution. He's a much better player now than he's ever been because he's learned all these things."

SEE MOST ON PAGE 62



Duke's Grayson Allen ends up under media row after diving for a loose ball against Rhode Island during the second round on Saturday.

MATT FREED, POST-GAZETTE/AP

UConn hires Rhode Island coach Dan Hurley » Page 60

